

MAXIMIAN.

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MAXIMIAN;

A

TRAGEDY:

TAKEN FROM CORNEILLE,

AND DEDICATED

TO

WILLIAM LOCK, ESQ.

LONDON:

Printed by Luke Hanford, Great Turnstile, Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

SOLD BY LEIGH AND SOTHEY, YORK-STREET,
COVENT-GARDEN.

1800.

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TRAGEDY

BY JOHN CORNWALLIS

AND DEDICATED

41.
11. 1.

WILLIAM LOCKE



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TO

WILLIAM LOCK, ESQ

DEAR SIR,

IF I was not acquainted with the benignant turn of your mind, which disposes you to have greater pleasure in commending than in criticising, I should fear to address my Play to one whose learning and classic taste is so universally acknowledged, but knowing you as I do, apologies would be superfluous. To You I owe the amusement I have derived from CORNEILLE'S MAXIMIAN, the perusal of which suggested to me a scheme that occupied several of my hours during the last year of my residence in your neighbourhood, where indifferent health, and a habit of retirement, render'd an employment of that sort entertaining to me. You will perceive I have ventured to deviate, in some parts
of

DEDICATION.

of the play, from the original, as I thought a literal translation would be too formal, and that more bustle and variety were necessary to render it interesting, particularly at this era, when splendid effect is the peculiar fashion of the day; but I have endeavour'd to make my characters, as nearly as I could, fac-similes of those the French Author has given.

According to the historic account of FAUSTINA's subsequent conduct, she could not probably, at any period of her life, have deserved the praise bestowed by CORNEILLE; but he has drawn so charming a portrait of her character, that the translator may be allowed to use the same poetical license, instead of introducing any shades which would obscure its brilliancy: I therefore give FAUSTINA to the public what the Poet may have feigned, rather than what the Historian has recorded.

Permit me, dear Sir, while I acknowledge your kindness in lending me the original from whence I form'd my Tragedy, to request that you will consider

DEDICATION.

*my Dedication as a Tribute of Gratitude for the in-
variable Friendship and Attention which I have long
experienced from you and your amiable Family.*

I have the pleasure to subscribe myself,

DEAR SIR,

Your truly obliged,

and obedient humble Servant,

SOPHIA BURRELL.

DRAMMÆ PERSONÆ.

CONSTANTINE,	-	Emperor of Rome.
MAXIMIAN,	- -	Father to the Empress.
SEVERUS,	- - -	General in the Roman Army.
LICINIUS,	- - -	Consul.
SEXTUS,	- - -	Captain of the Guard.
MARTIAN,	- -	Confidential Friend to Maximian.
STRATON,	- - -	} Conspirators.
EUTROPUS,	- - -	
LUCILIUS,	- - -	
FELIX,	- - -	
POMPILIUS,	- - -	
SATURNIN,	- - -	
FAUSTINA,	- -	The Empress.
CONSTANTIA,	- -	The Emperor's Sister.
FLAVIA,	- - -	An Attendant.

Scene, ROME.

MAXIMIAN;

A

TRAGEDY.

SCENE I.—*Moonlight.*—*A Scene in one of the Streets of Rome.*—*Martian, wrapped in a long Cloak, is seen walking to and fro in a thoughtful Manner.*—*The Clock strikes Ten.*

MARTIAN.

WHAT not yet come! perhaps his genius, warn'd
By some instinctive dread, has interpos'd,
And told him mischief rides on Fortune's wheel,
To make our meeting hazardous. This night
May render all our schemes abortive. Time
Moves on with rapid steps, and every hour
Is big with fate, when dark conspiracy
Fears interruption. If Severus comes
Before we gain Licinius to our party,
The crafty measures of our chief must fail,
Oppos'd to his superior influence. Then

B

Wilt

Wilt thou in vain, Maximian, paint the wrongs
 Done to Severus. Tho' his pride may feel
 The bitter insult, tho' his blasted hopes,
 His disappointed love, may goad his soul,
 It cannot surely win him to our purpose.
 Licinius comes not, but methinks I see
 Our daring chief. (*At this moment loud shouts are heard.*)

Enter Maximian hastily.

What mean these sounds of joy?
 Wherefore, my Lord, at such an hour as this,
 The voice of loud acclaim? Where is Licinius?

MAXIMIAN.

Martian! the fates are adverse to my wishes;
 We have no time to lose—Severus comes.
 The news of victory, most unexampled,
 Most glorious to himself, (but death to me,)—
 Fills every Roman breast, save mine, with joy,
 And the glad multitude already swarm
 About the Forum, with their odious noise
 Rending the air, and stealing from dull night
 Her privacy and rest. Before this time
 Licinius had been here, but messengers
 Arriving from the camp dispatches brought
 For him to lay before the Emperor.
 Yet have I hopes to win him to our party
 Before this conqueror comes, whose stubborn virtue,
 And high-wrought sentiments of public good,
 Wou'd start at mention of a plot like mine.
 Unless his friend Licinius leads the way,
 Weak is my policy, and vain my schemes.

MARTIAN.

A thought this moment darts across my mind:
 Deep as thou art in every wile, and skill'd

A TRAGEDY.

3

In every passion of the human heart,
Can'st thou not turn his passion for the prince
To our advantage? fill him with alarms,
Suspensions, jealousies, and anger too,
Against the Emperor?

MAXIMIAN.

'Twas my design
To try the very plan. I meant, my friend,
This night to join you in the conference;
And had he true to the appointment been,
Myself had finish'd what your agency
Commission'd you to hint at. Time is past,
Yet time may be redeem'd. My subtle scheme
Is but deferr'd, and may to-morrow gain
What has been lost to-day. (*looks at his watch.*)

Go, my good Martian,

Meet the conspirators; the hour is near
When we our nightly vigils must resume
With double ardour. Tell them to expect me,
But on thy life no word that may induce them
To think that I am leader of the band. [*Exit Martian.*]
Must I be ever foil'd? Oh how the name
Of that proud man is loathsome to my ear!
His stern demeanour, his unbending virtue,
Is my aversion. I perceive him move
Athwart my path, and crush my darling hopes;
Blast the bright harvest of my deep laid schemes,
And strike the Crown, ev'n from my eager grasp.
Severus! yes, thy victory to me
Is poison and despair. Thy presence now
Unlook'd for, undesir'd, may frustrate all
My daring plans, and rob me of Licinius,
Before my plot is ripe for execution.
Like a dark demon placed 'twixt me and fortune,

B 2

I see

I see thee frown, and all my hopes are lost
 Beneath thy powerful sway. Yet have I done
 Whatever man can do to make thee hate
 The name of Constantine; for this alone
 I gave my daughter, thy betrothed wife,
 To the enamour'd Emperor—for this
 Turn'd a deaf ear to all her love for thee,
 Beheld her tears unmov'd, and led her forth
 To be my instrument of vengeance. Down
 Ye childish feelings that now play me false,
 And knock against my heart; *that* heart is steel'd
 Against affection: perish every thought
 But royalty: Maximian knows no tie
 Of love or friendship when ambition calls. [Exit.

SCENE II.—*A Room, the Door of which is open, and
 discovers the Conspirators round a Table, with Papers,
 &c.—Martian comes forward.*

MARTIAN.

Thus have our schemes to win the brave Licinius
 Been frustrated; yet our great leader looks
 Within himself for adequate resources.
 How deep and crafty are his stratagems!
 It was to compass Constantine's destruction
 That he so secretly, and with such haste,
 Gave him his lovely daughter, who with tears
 Urg'd her long promise to Severus. Rage
 Inflam'd his breast, and by his stern command

She

A TRAGEDY.

5

She learnt to hide the sorrows that oppress her,
And gave her hand to Constantine. This deed
Must make Severus his inveterate foe.
Nor is this all. The influence he has gain'd
Over the Emperor, gives him means to play
His game securely. He persuades the prince
To let his sister, fair Constantia, be
Reserved as a reward for proud Severus,
Who cannot but be pleas'd (Faustina gone)
To match with royalty. When this is known,
Licinius, who has loved Constantia long,
Will be her brother's foe. That point once gain'd,
We bind him to our party. Strengthen'd thus,
If private means shou'd fail, by force of arms
We may dethrone the emperor. Meantime
Maximian's subtle arts will disunite
Severus from him, on whose head will fall
Imputed treason.

Enter the Conspirators.

EUTROPUS.

Where is Maximian? wrong'd by Constantine
As I have been, I thirst for retribution.

FELIX,

Not less than I do. He disgraced my house,
Deprived me of an office held for years,
And gave it to Valerius.

SATURNIN.

He may prate
Of virtue and religion—I despise
A tame dull moralist.

STRATON.

Nay, he is brave.

B 3

SATURNIN.

MAXIMIAN.

SATURNIN.

But he is cool, delib'rate: give me rather
 An enterprizing, bold, and restless chief,
 A friend to rapine, plunder, and disorder;
 By men like these we are to gain.

MARTIAN.

I hear

The footsteps of Maximian.

Enter Maximian.

MAXIMIAN.

Hail my friends!

Hail sons of freedom! Here again we meet,
 Perhaps to meet no more. Severus comes;
 There is no time to lose. Confederates
 In danger, partners in the glorious cause,
 Doom'd to one common lot, to fall together
 Or share the gain attendant on rebellion,
 How beats your hearts? Is there a man among ye
 Who wishes to retreat? if such there be,
 Let him speak out.

ALL.

Lead on! we are resolved.

MAXIMIAN.

Nay my good friends, tis not Maximian's cause;
 It is *your* cause, it is the cause of *Rome*—
 That is my object. What is your's? Reward!
 Reward immediate! fortune, rank, whate'er
 Th' ambitious pant for, and the bold obtain.
 Yet be not rash, consider what ye do,
 Weigh well the hazard—and the gain.

ALL.

We have.

MAXIMIAN.

A TRAGEDY.

MAXIMIAN.

Are ye then fix'd to share the enterprize,
And take its consequences?

MARTIAN.

Yes, Maximian,

I answer thus for all. The magnitude
Of this bold scheme affrights not men like us,
Resolved to work some change. Th' exploit appears
Devoid of difficulty, if we prove
True to our trust, and clothe in *secrecy*
Our firm design; on this methinks th' atchievement
And 'vantage of the business must depend.

MAXIMIAN.

Let us then, brethren, in a bond unite.
Ne'er to betray each other. Let us swear
No threats, no fears, no change, shall make us false
To this our cause; that nothing shall have power
To shake our purpose. We will greatly live,
Or die together. Thus Maximian swears.

ALL.

We swear the same.

STRATON.

But who must lead us on?

MARTIAN.

In time the leader of this enterprize
Will shew himself. I am his deputy,
Commission'd to express how much he feels
Dispos'd to patronise, and to reward ye.

MAXIMIAN. (*shewing a paper.*)

This paper stipulates such great advantage,
That every man amongst us may rely
On vast possessions if our plan succeeds.

B 4

Soon

Soon as the moment ripe for execution
 Arrives, a daring chief will head the band,
 And lead us on to the rewards we aim at.
 Night wears away, and we must soon disperse.
 Let us within, peruse these articles,
 And 'ere we part our solemn contract sign.

*(They all retire to the inner Apartment, the folding-doors
 close.)*

SCENE III.—*A spacious Apartment.*—Maximian at a
 Table reading Letters.

Enter an Attendant followed by Licinius.

ATTENDANT.

My Lord, the Consul.

[Exit.

MAXIMIAN. *(rising).*

Welcome, brave Licinius!

Thrice welcome on this day, when Rome exults
 In the achievements of her bravest sons.
 I long'd to see thee, and partake the joy
 Thy bosom feels at this important news,
 So glorious for Severus; long thy friend,
 Thy fellow soldier, and cotemporary
 In valour as in virtue.

LICINIUS.

None, my Lord,
 Can more rejoice in what concerns the state
 Than I do. Nor is there a deed more glorious
 In all Rome's annals than this victory,

So

A TRAGEDY.

9

So well atchieved. The glory of Severus
Is now complete; and haughty Gaul subdued
Kneels at the victor's feet, whose eagles fly
Triumphant over half the world. What praise,
What triumph is sufficient for a man
To whom the kingdom owes so much. I hear
The Emperor means to crown his services
By high distinctions—by the name of Cæsar,
And public triumph through the gates of Rome.

MAXIMIAN.

'Tis well! thus valour shou'd be crown'd.—'Twas said,
(But that is most improbable) reward
Still higher was decreed.

LICINIUS.

What means my Lord?

MAXIMIAN.

I heard a rumour that the Emperor
Meant to bestow his sister, fair Constantia,
On the successful chief—but this no doubt
You wou'd have heard, who share his confidence.

LICINIUS. (*alarmed.*)

Constantia wed Severus! never yet
Has the least whisper of a tale so strange

MAXIMIAN.

(*Speaking low, and as if he meant not for Licinius to
hear him.*)

Generous Licinius! unsuspecting friend!
Why must I take that bandage from your eyes
Which hides a scene of crafty deep injustice?

(*After a pause, to Licinius.*)

I see your strong emotions—I have long
Observed your growing passion for Constantia,
And seen the princess smile upon your hopes.
The Emperor surely might divide his favours

'Twixt

'Twixt you my friend, and fortunate Severus,
 He owes to *both* what he bestows on *one*,
 Each shou'd partake his bounty. Yes, Licinius,
 You too deserve distinction—but alas!
 Injustice rules. My spirit is indignant
 That you shou'd seem degraded by the means
 Which gives such triumph to Severus. One
 Resplendent victory is scarce enough
 Sure to deserve th' imperial name of Cæsar,
 And win a prize so lovely as Constantia.

LICINIUS.

Of rank, of triumph, I no envy feel.
 I know the worth, the valour of Severus.
 Whatever honours he receives, save one,
 My voice will join the multitude in praise;
 And with a soldier's warmth, a friend's regard,
 I shall behold him—but Constantia's heart
 I dare dispute. Let him beware of *that*,
 Lest I forget past offices of friendship,
 Lose my respect for Constantine, and dare
 Oppose the harsh decree.

MAXIMIAN. (*aside.*)

The poison works.

LICINIUS.

My Lord, you rule

The Emperor's counsels. Both by near alliance,
 And ties of friendship, you have gain'd the means
 Of sure persuasion. If Licinius ever
 Deserved your favour, I entreat you try
 Your influence to prevent this dreadful union,
 The empress too (for filial duty fated)
 Will act as you direct; I pray you see
 The fair Faustina—whatsoe'er she wishes,
 The emperor grants; let her then use the power

She

A TRAGEDY.

She justly holds, and save Constantia for me.
'Tis not the rank of princess that attracts
A heart like mine, 'tis the ten thousand charms
That wait upon a mind so richly stored
That I adore in her. Constantia bears
A soul replete with dignity, yet form'd
For tenderness and love: I long have seen
That to a manly energy of mind
She joins the sweetest feminine attractions,
And gives a bright example to the age
Of Roman virtue, gentleness, and truth.

Enter Sextus.

SEXTUS. (*to Licinius.*)

My Lord Licinius, Constantine has sent,
Desiring you wou'd instantly attend him.

LICINIUS. (*going.*)

(*To Maximian*) Forget not my request.

MAXIMIAN.

Believe me, Sir,

Whatever man can do, I will attempt.

[*Exeunt different ways.*]

SCENE IV.—*Faustina and Flavia in a magnificent
Apartment.*

FAUSTINA.

Oh! my heart sickens at this dreaded triumph.
Is Martian really gone? Is he deputed
To offer these high honours to Severus?

FLAVIA.

FLAVIA.

Madam he is, and by your father's choice.
The Emperor bade him name a proper person,
And he resolv'd on Martian.

FAUSTINA.

Surely, Flavia,

Licinius should have been the messenger
Of Constantine's intentions: I cou'd wish
Severus wou'd decline the proffer'd honours.
Magnanimous, successful as he is,
His valour known, his services acknowledged,
Fame flies before him with capacious wings,
And bears his conquests to th' astonish'd world:
What need has *he* of triumph, arches rais'd
To bear his name, the shouts of Roman prætors,
The civic crown, or pompous name of Cæsar?
His deeds heroic no memorial need,
They live in every Roman breast; nor wants
That man a title who his country hails
Its hero, and whose worth the Emperor owns.

Enter Maximian.

MAXIMIAN.

How fares it with you empress? I am come
A suitor from Licinius; he implores
Our joint assistance to persuade your lord.
The Consul hears it is the Emperor's will
That fair Constantia, who he dares to love,
Shall wed Severus. (*Faustina starts.*)

FAUSTINA.

How events crowd on
In swift succession! (*aside*) Can Severus then

So

A TRAGEDY.

13

So soon forget me? Hence rebellious thoughts!
I am myself again.

(*To Maximian.*) 'Tis but this moment
That Flavia met Licinius, who in haste
Was summon'd to the Emperor; he surmiz'd
Some babbling fellow had the secret told
Of his attachment to the fair Constantia,
And roused her brother's anger.

MAXIMIAN.

'Tis no doubt

A cruel blow, that her he fondly loves
(Tho' indiscreetly) shou'd be made the prize
Of the successful chief; but interest
Prevails in courts. The Emperor is resolv'd,
And I am order'd to convene the senate,
Where he intends to make his pleasure known
Respecting this alliance. Farewell daughter,
I must obey his orders.

[*Exit.*]

FAUSTINA.

Cruel father!

Thy rigour has condemn'd the sad Faustina
To suffer all the pangs she now endures.
Ah fatal glory! glittering airy toy,
I am thy victim.—At thy gaudy shrine
A parent's hand cou'd sacrifice his child,
And wrong Severus.

FLAVIA.

Think of rank and power.

The die is cast, and 'tis the part of wisdom
To make the best of an unhappy lot.
Think that you acted from a noble motive—
Your duty to Maximian. Tho' ambitious,
He is your father—Constantine your husband,
And you an empress.

FAUSTINA.

MAXIMIAN,

FAUSTINA.

Ah! my gentle friend,
 Sharp thorns are hid beneath the bright tiara
 That marks me for an Empress. I confess
 The brave and virtuous Constantine is form'd
 To be beloved, and might have been by me,
 Had I not known, and heard, and loved Severus.

FLAVIA.

Madam, beware of unavailing grief
 And fond regrets, that duty must condemn.
 Forget Severus.

FAUSTINA.

At a name so dear

My griefs redouble—if you love me, Flavia,
 Speak it no more. To suffer and be silent
 Is the hard task I must perform; yet memory
 Will sometimes represent past scenes, and waken
 Those pangs of sorrow which I strive to hide.
 Yet less do I lament my own sad fate,
 Than the hard usage that Severus met.
 When he was chosen to command the army,
 And march against the Gauls, his noble breast
 Glow'd with the hope, that from the field of battle
 He shou'd return with glorious laurels crown'd,
 And prove himself more worthy of Faustina.
 Alas! the Emperor saw me; 'twas my fate
 To please his fancy;—'twas my father's will
 I shou'd resign Severus, and be wretched—
 'Twas my misfortune not to dare oppose him.
 The early precepts that my mind imbibed
 Were those of duty to my father; oft
 My tender mother charged me to obey
 His will in all things: 'twas a constant lesson,

Even

A TRAGEDY.

15

Even from my cradle to maturer age,
To reverence the Gods, and love my father.
The words of her who brought me into being,
Who watch'd my infant years with anxious care,
And proved herself a fond indulgent parent,
Sunk deep into my heart, and when, alas!
Death robb'd me of that kind protecting friend,
I thought myself by double duty bound
To act as my surviving parent wish'd,
And study him in all things. To dispute
His will I deem'd a crime, and therefore gave
My hand to Constantine as he commanded.

FLAVIA.

And worldly minded men will sure acquit him.
He saw your merits with a father's eye,
And grew ambitious to advance his daughter.
He knew your charms wou'd well adorn a throne,
And to the *General* he preferr'd the *Emperor*.

FAUSTINA,

I must forgive him; I am bound to do so;
But fear the brave Severus will accuse me
Of perfidy and base ingratitude.
I lose his good opinion; yet tis better
That he shou'd think I am not worth regretting,
Than know the truth, and therefore wish to see me.
But shou'd he seek my presence, trust me, Flavia,
I know so well my duty, that I dare
Trust to myself for strength of mind sufficient
To hide the weakness of a trembling heart,
And meet him with the semblance of composure.
Now let us hence; the Emperor will expect
To see me in th' apartment of Constantia.
For her I feel a sisterly affection,
And in her sorrows find my own increas'd.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE

SCENE V.—*The Camp.—Martian going out.*

Severus and Sextus.

SEVERUS. (*after musing a few minutes.*)

Constantine and Faustina! these are names
 That ne'er were meant to meet—'twas infamous,
 'Twas base to exercise his royal power,
 Take mean advantage of an absent soldier,
 And while I fought his battles manfully,
 Thus rob me of my own. It shall not be!
 What gave her to me? 'twas her own free choice,
 Unbiaf'd by Maximian. Oh my Sextus!
 This blow has poison'd all the sweets of life:
 My laurels droop, and triumph charms no more.
 Ungrateful Emperor!—yet thou shalt not see
 My weakness and despair. Rome owes me thanks,
 And Gaul subdued acknowledges my power.
 I meant to seek the capitol in triumph,
 To shew myself the conqueror of the East,
 And worthy her whom I have lost—oh Heaven!
 Have lost by treachery. Yet this base act
 Sets me above him. I am greater now
 Than Constantine, tho' seated on his throne,
 And he shall tremble at my power. Yes, Sextus,
 Who robs me is a villain—he shall feel
 None with impunity can wrong Severus.

SEXTUS.

Surely, my Lord, this is some idle story,
 Some rumour coin'd to try your fortitude,

I cannot

A TRAGEDY.

17

I cannot think so ill of Constantine.
Tell me Severus, if it seems consistent,
That in the senate, where you stand so high
In public estimation, he shou'd dare
Propose that woman for his wife, to whom
Your vows were plighted; while the multitude
Consider you the bulwark of the state,
And sound loud Pæans to your name.

SEVERUS.

My Sextus,

The tale that Martian told admits no doubt,
And him who I have served has basely wrong'd me—
By yonder Sun I swear, my heart was bound
To Constantine, because he was my sovereign,
And I believed him virtuous and humane:
I find him now at once both mean, and cruel.
My wrongs cry out—they stifle amity,
Create resentment, cancel all the bonds
And gentle registers of past regard.
'Twas not the rank of Emperor bound me to him;
For what advantage cou'd the prince bestow
On one like me, who earn'd my bread by war?
I loved him as a man—that man is changed,
And so is my regard. I still revere
What Constantine once was, but hate him now.

SEXTUS.

You will not then accept the offer'd triumph,
Nor visit Rome, unless by his command?

SEVERUS.

He dares not to command; I here abjure
The word obedience.—Bear with me good Sextus!
Excuse this weakness of your friend; my heart

C

Is

Is not a hard one, and it feels most deeply
 The wrong I have sustain'd. Yet honour glows
 Within my bosom, and the name of rebel
 Shall ne'er be join'd with mine. Sleep then my sword,
 Sleep in thy scabbard: I will shew myself
 At Rome, and there accept the martial triumph
 Decreed me by my fellow citizens,
 Then bear my laurels to a distant coast,
 And shun the man whom I despise.

SEXTUS.

'Tis well.
 I see thee now as I cou'd wish. Thy Sextus
 Shall make due preparations for the march.
 Farewell. [Exit.

SEVERUS.

False hopes of love must now be laid aside,
 And glory be my mistress. Oh Faustina!
 How have I loved thee! but no more of this.
 Ambition has allured her to a throne,
 And I must learn to gaze on one so dear
 As thro' a convex, which at distance throws
 The object we contemplate. Yes, false woman,
 Thy merits too are lessen'd in my sight,
 And I will try to meet thee as I ought. [Exit.

(As Severus goes out Martian re-enters.)

MARTIAN.

Thus far my embassy has been successful
 Beyond Maximian's hopes. I see the rage
 That burns within the bosom of Severus
 Will silence duty, and provoke revenge.
 Crown'd as he is with laurels, they will seem
 No longer worth his wearing, and Faustina,

A TRAGEDY.

19

The lost Faustina! will excel them all,
And prove the bribe to lead him on to ruin.
I know the deep-laid scheme on which Maximian
Builds all his hopes; he will increase the flame
My breath has kindled, and with artful tales
Win on the ear of this plain honest soldier,
And make him see the Emperor as a tyrant,
Who robs him of his own affianced bride.
Severus once revolting from his duty
Will be the signal for our enterprize.
The odium of rebellion will be *his*,
The harvest *ours*; and in Maximian's hands
His destiny will rest. Licinius too
Falls in the snare that points to his destruction:
Rage, at th' intended union of Severus
With his soul's idol, makes him insolent,
Loud in complaint, even to a sort of menace.
Meantime I keep Maximian's secret safe,
And manage the conspirators. Whene'er
The flame bursts forth and reaches Constantine,
Severus or Licinius will be deem'd
The leader of our band. Then triumph Martian!
The promis'd honours and the rich reward
Maximian has engag'd himself to give me
Will be a recompence well worth obtaining.
Now straight to Rome I'll take my way, and greet
Maximian's ear with tidings of the rage
That rankles in Severus' breast. 'Ere long
The chief in proud parade will take his march,
And to the capitol triumphant lead
His Gallic captives, and the spoils of war.
That moment, Constantine! will adverse be
To thy security—yet none will cry,

C 2

"Beware

"Beware great Emperor! there's danger near:
"Maximian's engines now are set at work,
"This is their master-wheel." Severus gain'd,
Conspiracy will wear a bolder mien,
And thy detested sway shall be no more. [Exit.

END OF ACT I.

A C T II.

Opens with the Triumph of Severus.—The Procession is seen passing through the Arch erected in honour of Severus, moving in slow time to a March in the following Order :

The Licitors, Centurions, Tribunes, Consuls, &c.

The Spoils of the Enemy drawn on Chariots.

Waggons laden with the Armour of the Gauls.

Numbers of Men bearing the Gold and Silver Money in Vessels, emboss'd Bowls, Goblets, and Cups.

The Trumpeters, with the Tuba, sounding a Charge as in Battle.

Oxen with gilt Horns, adorned with Garlandas, and attended by Boys in white Tunics, with Gold and Silver Platters in their Hands.

The Ensigns of Rome.

Steeds of War in trappings of Purple and Gold.

The vanquish'd King's Chariot, with his Armour and Diadem, followed by the Captives.

The Imperator, with the Corona Triumphalis, bearing a Laurel Bough in his Right Hand, and riding in a gilt Car drawn by four White Horses.

Then the Roman Officers precoding the Soldiery, divided into Bands.

The Ensign of each Legion.—A Golden Eagle on the Top of a Spear, holding a Thunderbolt in his Talons, followed by Men singing in Chorus.

In this Order they march to the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus for the Spoils to be solemnly dedicated and hung up in the Temple.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Palace.*

FAUSTINA. (*with a Letter in her hand.*)

Yet why shou'd he desire this interview?
 If he thinks ill of me, he shou'd avoid
 The creature he despises. By this letter
 He asks me as a friend, a brother, one
 To whom my fame is dearer than his life,
 To let him see me.—If I had denied him,
 'Twou'd seem as if I knew myself in fault;
 Or, what is worse, as if I was afraid
 To trust my virtue.

Enter Flavia.

FLAVIA.

Madam, be prepared.

Soon will the chief arrive; ev'n now I saw
 The proud proceffion (follow'd by the shouts
 Of an admiring multitude) returning.
 The spoils of war are in the Temple placed,
 And at the gate, Severus with an air
 Of graceful gratitude, dismiss'd his soldiers
 To their respective homes, where each (impatient
 To seek his wife or children) gladly run.
 Himself, alighting from his stately car,
 Resign'd the courfers to his charioteer,
 And leaning on the arm of Sextus, left
 The cavalcade, as if this triumph (envy'd
 By common minds) rather oppress'd than pleas'd him.
 I mark'd his steps, and saw him this way turn;
 Perhaps, he is already at the gates.

FAUSTINA.

FAUSTINA.

I hear a noise good Flavia! see who comes. [Exit
I know that voice—it is, it must be him. Flavia.
Now fluttering heart be still.

Re-enter Flavia.

FLAVIA.

Severus, madam,
Waits in the anti-room to be admitted.
Are you compos'd?

FAUSTINA.

Flavia, I know my duty.

Enter Severus.

FAUSTINA. (*after a pause.*)

Rome owes her warmest thanks to you Severus,
And Rome is grateful. Let me join with those
Who on this day of triumph greet the hero,
To whose victorious arm such praise is due.

SEVERUS. (*greatly agitated.*)

Nay mock me not—I do not ask for praise.
The voice of popular applause no more
Is music to my ear. There was a time
When to the sound of praise my heart wou'd beat;
But this is over. Glory, fame, and war,
No longer animate Severus. Fall'n,
Dead to the world, because deprived of thee,
I'm but the shadow of the man I was.

FAUSTINA. (*alarm'd.*)

Ah most unkind Severus! wherefore thus
Offend my ear, and pierce my heart?

SEVERUS.

I crave
Your pardon lady—this unmanly weakness
Shall be suppress'd. I come not to upbraid you,
I know Faustina merited a throne;
She is my Empress . . . Oh the bitter thought!
Wife to another. —

FAUSTINA.

Therefore learn, to hate me.
Say that the dazzling lustre of a throne
Charm'd my weak fancy, and allured my heart
From its allegiance to its rightful owner.
Think that Severus was not worth a thought,
When balanced with a throne—believe me false,
And never see me more.

SEVERUS.

Alas Faustina!
Can I behold that face and think thee perjur'd?
Some secret cause there is—some base persuasion
Has sure been practis'd,

FAUSTINA.

Spare me there Severus,
If duty more than love has been the cause,
You shou'd respect my silence on the subject.

SEVERUS.

Oh! if an hundred thrones were offer'd me,
They cou'd not make amends for what I've lost.
Forgive me this distraction—I perceive
Maximian has betray'd me. 'Tis ambition,
Accursed ambition, that has tempted him
To act this treacherous part. Alas! I rave;
Whate'er the cause has been, imports but little
To one whose loss can never be repair'd.

Ah

A TRAGEDY.

25

Ah look not thus with tender pity—arm
That brow with frowns—assist my feeble reason
By some kind falsehood—treat me with disdain,
And hate the man whom you once swore to love.
Yet this I cannot wish.—No dear Faustina!
You sure may be allow'd to pity me:
Disdain wou'd irritate my wounded mind;
I cou'd not bear it. Let me rather hope
'Twas not your wish to ruin me for ever,
But that some strange and secret motive work'd
A sudden change.—For me, no more remains;—
I must despair and die. While Rome bestows
Her honours on me, while I *seem* to triumph,
I am more wretched than the captive Gaul
Who wears my chains, gazes with envy on me,
Thinks of his native land, and deeply mourns.
I am bereft of every hope.

FAUSTINA.

No more!

Believe me, time and reason will concur
To calm these sorrows.

SEVERUS.

Crüel one forbear!

Tell me not this. To you it may be easy
To banish every trace of past affection;
But had you loved, alas! as I have done

FAUSTINA.

I wou'd forget it. Learn of me Severus,
Learn to be silent for the sake of honour.
Oh! if my glory, if my peace of mind
Is dear to you

SEVERUS.

If it is dear? Faustina!

You cannot doubt it.—You as soon might ask

II

If I have ever loved you. Speak, command me;
Whatever you require shall be obey'd.

FAUSTINA.

Swear then no more to agonize me thus.
Remember I am bound to Constantine
By a most sacred tie. Hear me Severus!
We cannot meet again, unless you promise
The theme of love shall never be renew'd.

SEVERUS.

Yes! I will promise all that you desire.
This meeting over, and my mind shall gain
Its usual firmness: for your dignity,
(Perhaps your safety,) it is requisite
That I assume composure. I must stifle
The secret murmurings of a broken spirit,
And tho' I suffer, it shall be in silence.

Enter Flavia.

FLAVIA.

The princess, madam, wishes for your presence.

FAUSTINA.

I come—farewell Severus! and remember
The only terms on which we meet again.

SEVERUS.

My word is given, and I will rather die
Than derogate from honour. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE

SCENE II.—*The Emperor's Apartment.*CONSTANTINE. (*Speaking to an Attendant.*)

Go! let the princess know I wish to see her. [*Exit*
I see too plainly, from the fullen manner *Attendant.*
With which Licinius heard me, that Constantia
Has dared bestow her heart, unauthorized
By my consent; yet it shall be in vain.
'Tis fix'd, Severus must espouse my sister:
Her dignity, my own repose, demand it.
He is my rival—dreadful recollection!
He comes array'd in all the charms that wait
On valourous actions, and unquestion'd virtue,
To make me tremble. Yes, heroic man,
Ev'n Constantine by thee is taught to feel
What he ne'er knew before—a jealous dread
Transforms me to a coward. When I see
The lovely features of Faustina wear
A melancholy shade, too well I guess
That secretly she pines. I know her virtue,
Know I can trust her, yet I cannot bear
Another shou'd dispute her heart with me.
Severus ever has been thought ambitious,
And he must be rewarded. What remains
For me to do, but to bestow Constantia
On this all-conquering man. My sister's merit,
Her beauty, and her rank, perhaps will charm him;
And who so worthy of this high alliance,
As one to whom the state so greatly owes?

Enter

Enter Constantia.

Sister! an idle rumour has prevail'd
Which I discredit, and have therefore sent
Not now to question you, but to declare
What my intention is. This day the senate
Has (without one dissenting voice) proclaim'd
That none so well deserves the Emperor's sister
As him whose valiant arm has done the state
Such recent services. The public wish
Is, that I raise you to the rank of Empress,
And name Severus for your husband. *(Going.)*

CONSTANTIA.

Sir!

I thank you as I ought for these high proofs
Of brotherly regard. Yet . . . stay and hear me,
Permit Constantia, haughty as the world
Has deem'd her, sister to a mighty Emperor,
And happy in his friendship, to declare
She wants no higher station.—I confess
The merit of Severus,—yet forgive me
If I intreat you . . .

CONSTANTINE.

What the state requires

You will not dare refuse—nay look not thus.
The hostage madam! for your prompt obedience
Shall be Licinius.—Tremble for *his* head.
I see too plainly now, that he has dared
To raise his views ev'n to the throne. No more!
I leave you to decide his fate. What ho! *(calling out.)*
Send in Severus. *[Exit Constantine.]*

CONSTANTIA,

A TRAGEDY.

29

CONSTANTIA.

Sad alternative!

How shall I act? I must preserve Licinius,
'Tho' I am made the sacrifice.

Enter Severus.

The state

Owes much to him who has for Rome procured
Increased dominion; but alas! my Lord,
The recompence they destin for such service
Is little worth the having. Constantine,
Who till this hour with kind fraternal love
And generous sentiments has been impress'd,
Now acts the tyrant; 'tis his stern command
That I shou'd be your bride—I know my duty,
I can fulfil it, tho' my heart will break.
I know, and I applaud your many virtues,
But my affections are not in my power.
Licinius is the man who I have long
Prefer'd to all mankind—I say no more.
So great a soul as yours can ne'er require
The hand of her whose heart is pre-engaged.

SEVERUS.

Madam

CONSTANTIA. (*hastily.*)

Methinks I hear Maximian's voice.

I wou'd not that the favourite who directs
The Emperor's counsels shou'd convey to him
The substance of our conversation; briefly
I therefore pray you to revolve the means
By which we may avoid the Emperor's anger,
And yet prevent what neither can desire.

[*Exit Constantia.*

Enter

Enter Maximian.

MAXIMIAN.

What means that sigh, when blooming beauty smiles,
And bright ambition gives her charms more lustre?

SEVERUS.

I brook not well this question from Maximian.

MAXIMIAN.

What means Severus?

SEVERUS.

Can you ask my meaning?

Am I a man so capable of change,
So destitute of honour, that my heart
Can servilely obey ambition's call,
And wed Constantia while your daughter lives?
Life is a burthen to me.—I despise
The rank with which (as if it were a bribe
A man like me cou'd covet) they have offer'd
To make my wrongs seem lighter. No Maximian!
I am undone, and your perfidious hand
Has been the first to seal my condemnation.

MAXIMIAN.

Judge not so hardly of your poor old friend.
Look on me Sir, am I not grown grey-headed
In th' Emperor's service? When with Dioclesian
I left the empire to more able hands,
Then did this Constantine receive me here,
And with due hospitality desired
That I shou'd dwell in Rome, and be the second
(Inferior only to himself) in power.

SEVERUS.

And better had it been, old man, for thee,
If, like the wife and virtuous Dioclesian,

Thou

A TRAGEDY.

31

Thou hadst retired to thy paternal fields,
And studied nature and philosophy.

MAXIMIAN.

Wou'd I had done so! by remaining here
I by degrees became a slave—the creature
Of Constantine's proud will. Shame on my folly.
I deign'd to be oblig'd, supported by him.
And how was I, so scanty in my fortunes,
To pay these obligations? When you left us,
He ask'd me for my daughter—he demanded,
Proudly demanded her reluctant hand.
I dared not disobey him.—

SEVERUS. (*aside.*)

Curse the tyrant!

(*To Maximian.*) I cannot bear the subject; let us change it.
If Constantine can make Faustina happy,
I must not murmur that she fills a throne.
Which she is form'd to grace. All I can do
Is to avoid the match propos'd for me.
In this you must assist.

MAXIMIAN.

I can do more.

I can revenge

SEVERUS.

What means that scowling brow?
That eager eye? that quivering lip? as if
Some deep and dreadful secret harrow'd up
Your soul, and cry'd divulge me.

MAXIMIAN. (*grasping his hand.*)

I am a man unlike the form I wear,
Far different from my character in Rome.
They think me tame—I clank my chains in secret,
And try to break the links of servitude.

They

They think me timid—I am fierce and vengeful,
I can do deeds

SEVERUS.

Hah! whence this storm of passion?
I sometimes thought thee crafty, insincere,
A courtier, and a subtle politician; these
Were harmless qualities in one whose power
Was limited; but till this hour I never
Suppos'd thee discontented, wild, and daring.

MAXIMIAN.

And I have thought Severus bold, assuming,
Born for dominion—one who cou'd not bear
To be insulted—who, if once provoked,
Wou'd with the swiftness of the vulture's wing
Pursue the eagle if it seized his prey.
Firmness of spirit, manly energy,
(A hero's attributes) have heretofore
Glow'd in Severus' breast. I see him now
A mournful, dull, inactive slave; more fall'n
Than those whom his victorious arm has brought
Enchain'd from Gaul. Where is thy courage fled?

SEVERUS. (*half draws his Sword.*)

Provoke me not! who dares arraign my courage
Shall feel how far the lion may be roused.

MAXIMIAN.

Thou can'st not strike the father of Faustina.

SEVERUS. (*drops his Sword.*)

That name, like magic, sooths my angry spirit;
There is a sanctity of virtue in her
That fills my soul with reverential awe,
Which must extend to thee. Yes, thou art safe.
But try me not too far—I cannot bear
My courage shou'd be question'd.

MAXIMIAN.

A TRAGEDY.

33

MAXIMIAN.

Then exert it.
And if you love Faustina, try to win her.

SEVERUS. (*starts.*)

If I do love Faustina? Heaven and earth!

MAXIMIAN.

She is your right, you may regain her still.

SEVERUS. (*eagerly.*)

Shew me the means—if any means there are
Devoid of villainy.

MAXIMIAN.

Had you a friend

Imprison'd by a cruel creditor,
Condemn'd in prison long to lay and pine,
Wou'd you not try to break the bars of iron
That tyranny had placed to keep him there?
Wou'd you not give him liberty? My Lord,
I will no longer use ambiguous speech—
Faustina may be yours, if you will join me.
If you are bold, you need not be unhappy,
And Rome will thank you if proud Constantine
Is driv'n from that high station which he fills
So badly.

SEVERUS. (*astonish'd.*)

Can you be in earnest? How!
The Emperor be depos'd! Faustina mine
On terms like these! Can she approve a crime?
Can Rome require it?

MAXIMIAN.

Constantine has given
Offence to many of Patrician blood;
He has restricted, by his civil laws,

D

The

The senators from using former means
Of lawful interest—abolish'd rules
Long practis'd by the people. He appears
A mighty prince, when in the capitol
He moves with state, and the deceitful throng
Shout pæans to the name of Constantine:
But, Sir, the tribunes and the senators
May seem the men they are not. In the streets
Murmurs are heard, plebeians shake their heads,
And wish they had a different Emperor.
Severus! I have that bold spirit in me,
Which will not rest till it has compass'd all
My genius tells me to atchieve. If you
Who can command the army, will assist
My deep-laid plot, Faustina shall be yours.
If you recoil from vengeance and success,
Bury my secret in your generous breast;
For know, Maximian is resolved to break
His slavish yoke, or sword in hand to die.
I have a daring party of my own,
Men who have bound themselves by a strict oath
With me to conquer, or to perish. These
Now claim my presence. Eager to perform
Whatever I demand, they only need
The signal, and like blood-hounds, bold and savage,
They will burst forth from ambush, and refrain
From deeds of danger only when my voice
Cries 'hold!'—Among them there are certain names
Of consequence, men of approved good courage,
Friends to the commonwealth. I leave you Sir
To think on my discourse, and to resolve
Whether, confed'rated with these my friends,
You will revenge the wrongs you have received,
Punish a rival, and regain a mistress. [*Exit Maximian.*

SEVERUS.

SEVERUS.

Deliberate villain! hoary-headed traitor!
 Hence with thy vile perfidious reasoning!
 Ev'n my Faustina cou'd not prove a blessing
 If purchased by rebellion. He believed
 My honour could not long maintain its ground,
 Oppos'd to strong temptation. Constantine,
 Tho' thou hast wrong'd me, thou art Emperor here.
 If we met fairly on the field of battle,
 I wou'd engage thee, as an angry bull
 Singles its rival for the maddening fight,
 Provokes the war, and puts on all his strength—
 But *Rome* protects thee. [Exit Severus.]

SCENE III.—Maximian's House.—Martian alone in a
musing posture.

MARTIAN.

I shou'd despair of compassing our scheme,
 Was I not well acquainted with Maximian.
 But sure a man so versed in all the arts
 Of mischief, and of such undaunted spirit,
 Lives not in Rome. He has been brooding long
 O'er a most hazardous and subtle game,
 Which he bids fair to win.

Enter Maximian.

MAXIMIAN.

My faithful Martian!

Tell me how seem our friends? are they all steady?

Hast thou interrogated each by turn?
Does no one flinch?

MARTIAN.

They every one are true;
All eager for the hazard and the spoil.

MAXIMIAN.

Keep up this spirit. As for thee, good Martian!
I know thy secret hate of Constantine,
And firm attachment unto me. Besides,
I long have mark'd how thy inventive soul
Can furnish wise resources, on occasions
When feebler spirits droop, and cannot bear
Unlook'd-for obstacles, like feminine
And flexile tempers, that will make men faint
At sight of blood. Thou art my colleague, Martian,
In courage, as thou shalt be soon in power:
And if a dastard's cheek shews signs of fear,
If his lip tremble, and his flatt'ring tongue
Betrays rank cowardice, thy faithful hand
Must on the instant brief prevention bring
To possibility of utterance
That may undo us; therefore be, I pray you,
Most vigilant, observing, and alert.
This is no simple matter, no small deed,
That without danger, toil, and difficulty,
Can be perform'd. Mark then my stern command . . .
He dies who flinches—lest we perish all.

MARTIAN.

Methought I yesterday in Straton's speech
Discover'd hesitation, as if caus'd
By some embarrassment; but it wore off,
And in a recent loss, which makes him much
In need of speedy gain, I found the cause
Of temporary gloom and thoughtfulness.

A TRAGEDY.

37

This the reward propos'd will remedy,
And if a doubt was lurking in his mind,
Necessity, with strong resistless might,
Wou'd bind him to us. When at eve again
We meet, I will with penetrating eye
Observe his countenance, and if I find
Ought to suspect, even a particle
Of doubt, not more in substance than the net
A spider weaves, he dies before to-morrow.

MAXIMIAN.

I trust to thee.—Away my faithful friend.
My spirits wearied with this day's exertion
Require repose. I will retire awhile,
Collect my scatter'd thoughts, and marshal them
In proper order, lest emergency
Call for decision 'ere I am prepared.
We know the part that we have play'd to-day,
But none can fathom fate, or tell the streights
To-morrow may produce. The wisest plan
Is to suppose the worst is possible,
And guard against surprize. Remember Martian
We meet to-morrow at the hour of three. *[Exit.]*

END OF ACT II.

A C T III.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Rome.—Early Morning.—*

Straton alone.

STRATON.

Compunction wrestles with my hopes of gain,
 And breaks my slumbers. If before the deed
 I feel these horrors, what will be the case
 When conscience tells me I obtain'd reward
 By treason. Tho' I counterfeited well
 A mind at ease this evening when we met,
 My heart revolted at the arguments
 Held forth to make me steady. Martian spoke
 Of usurpation, treachery, and murder,
 As deeds familiar to his mind. I saw
 He thought me but a cold conspirator, and therefore
 For my security I strove to seem
 A firm adherent to so bad a cause.
 What's to be done? Time presses on apace,
 And every moment teems with mischief. Sleep
 I cannot, burthen'd with such heavy thoughts.
 How shall I act? The voice of justice cries,
 'Desert the men who bribe thee to their purpose;
 Preserve the Emperor's life, and timely shun
 Those glittering baits that Martian has display'd

To

To make thee prove a deep determin'd villain.
 If some must fall, 'tis just the bad shou'd die,
 And not the innocent. The state requires
 My instant aid, and tho' I must betray
 The men by whose pernicious arguments
 I have been lured awhile from honesty,
 Surely 'tis better to divulge the plot,
 Repent in time, and thus repair my fault.
 Yes, it shall be so—I will doubt no more.
 To-morrow I will privately request
 Admittance to the captain of the guard
 Sextus, whom I in former days have known,
 And always have respected; he shall hear
 This dangerous truth, and act as seems him best. [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*Gallery in the Palace.*—Faustina.—Severus
 following her.

FAUSTINA.

What means this second interview? Severus!
 You much offend me—'twas my firm resolve
 No more, except in public, to behold you.

SEVERUS.

Forgive this early and abrupt intrusion.
 Why shou'd you fly? Ah! think not I am come
 A cruel persecutor—know me better.
 Was I a villain, there are means held out

D 4

By

By which I might indulge my former hopes;
 But while this arm has strength to grasp a sword,
 It shall repel the treason, tho' the traitor
 Holds forth enchantments to perplex my senses.

FAUSTINA.

Your words are strange—I understand them not—
 Begone Severus! If the Emperor knows . . .
 Remember I'm the wife of Constantine,
 As such am bound to honour and obey him.

SEVERUS.

I know that duty binds you to the Emperor,
 And you protect him.—Yes, his life is sacred;

FAUSTINA.

Ah! you alarm me.—Who can seek his life?

SEVERUS.

Madam, a dark, most foul conspiracy,
 Is form'd against the Emperor.—Their leader
 Has try'd to warp me from those principles
 Which I have lived in, and shall hold till death.
 They offer me a bribe beyond all price,
 The richest jewel of the crown—Faustina!
 My honour bids me shun the dazzling bait,
 And rather die than win thee with dishonour.

FAUSTINA.

There spoke the noble-minded generous hero,
 The friend to virtue—amiable Severus!
 Sure thou wert born to bless and mend mankind,
 But say, who heads this foul conspiracy?
 Most criminal and horrid is the mind
 That cou'd invent such infamous designs.
 I ever thought Licinius was a man
 Who, tho' ambitious, ne'er cou'd be a traitor.

Can

A TRAGEDY.

41

Can he presume, because Constantia's hand
Is destin'd for another . . .

SEVERUS.

Far from him

Remove the dark suspicion—in his soul
True honour lives as in its native soil,
And never can be rooted thence. Faustina!
Have you the courage to be told a truth
Which will speak daggers to your mind. I see
You tremble at my words.—Ah madam! know
That you alone perhaps can save the Emperor.
Licinius is an obstacle they dread,
And therefore wish to drive him from his station;
Chief of the Emperor's guard, while he remains
Fix'd at the palace, Constantine is safe.
Take care they do not change the guard.

FAUSTINA.

Severus!

I'm all amazement at the words mysterious
That lately pass'd your lips. This dire suspense
Is terrible to bear. If any one
Whom I have called my friend is in this plot,
Tell me at once, lest I caress a serpent,
And ignorantly wrong the Emperor. Speak!
I charge you tell me all, or let me fly
To Constantine, apprise him of the plot,
And search for the conspirators.

SEVERUS.

Alas!

This cannot be, when you shall hear their names.
Madam, 'tis Martian who conducts the whole,
And seems the leader of the factious party,
Pompilius, Straton, and Lucilius, join

Their

Their names in this black roll. Eutropus too,
And Albin, with some more of less importance,
I have heard mentioned.

FAUSTINA.

What are these to me?

Can any of their lives be worth a thought
When Constantine is threaten'd?

SEVERUS.

There remains

Another name that must be join'd with treason.
Martian is but the suppositious leader,
There is another.

FAUSTINA.

Who is he?

SEVERUS. (*after a pause.*)
Maximian!

FAUSTINA.

Oh heavens my father!

SEVERUS.

Loveliest of women! while your virtuous zeal
Leads you to execrate a base assassin,
I mark how nature, pleading at your heart,
Calls the warm blood from your deserted cheek,
And makes you tremble at a father's name.
Lean on me madam, you are faint. (*leads her to a seat.*)

FAUSTINA.

Alas!

The dreadful news is like a thunderbolt,
It seems to crush me . . . yet say on my Lord.

SEVERUS.

Maximian's treason is unknown to all
Except myself.

FAUSTINA.

FAUSTINA.

And long may it remain so.
Deluded man! Ambition is the idol
That leads him to the sanguinary wish
On any terms to win the throne. I oft
Have heard him bitterly regret the hour
When, with the wise and temperate Diocletian,
He abdicated Rome's imperial sway:
But I ne'er thought . . .

SEVERUS.

He cou'd destroy your husband.

FAUSTINA. (*starting up.*)

Is't possible? Oh monstrous cruelty!
Tell me the means to save a life so sacred,
Yet tell me too, can I preserve my father?
How can I act? which way am I to turn?
Betray him not Severus, yet protect
The Emperor's person—watch my father's steps,
Learn his designs if possible, and write
To let me know what I must do.

SEVERUS.

No more.

Maximian comes,—I will obey your orders.

Enter Maximian.

MAXIMIAN.

Those orders by your looks appear unkind—
You look displeased.

SEVERUS.

The Empress disapproves
My presence Sir. I know my duty better
Than to continue here when she forbids me. [*Exit.*

MAXIMIAN.

MAXIMIAN.

How now, Faustina! tho' your sense of duty
 May urge you thus to frown upon a lover,
 Yet let me say that policy and wisdom
 Advise less rigorous treatment of the man
 To whom the kingdom is so much indebted,
 Forbear to irritate his generous mind,
 So deeply wounded as you know it is.
 Believe me there exists in Rome some men
 Of disaffected principles; beware
 Lest you should drive Severus to their party.

FAUSTINA.

My Lord! however he has cause to mourn,
 Severus never can allow revenge
 To make him act unworthy of himself.
 Suspect him of regret, but spare his glory:
 Fear for his life, but do not doubt his honour.

MAXIMIAN.

The Emperor doubts it, for suspicion walks
 Abroad in Rome. It sheds its baneful influence
 Into the royal breast. That disappointment
 Has with sharp fangs inflicted dreadful wounds
 Even in a hero's bosom, has been told
 The Emperor; and all the fervent love
 Severus manifested for my daughter
 Is made his accusation. Learn still more;
 That I have orders to observe him closely.
 Licinius, it is thought, by secret means
 Fans the rebellious flame of treason. He
 Raves for Constantia, and was heard to speak
 Of vengeance—At his voice, the guard, obedient
 To their lov'd Consul, may assail the Emperor.
 We must remove him from his office quickly,

Or

A TRAGEDY.

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Or it may be too late : Advise your Lord
To change the guard. I tremble for his safety.

Enter Flavia.

FLAVIA.

Madam ! Licinius craves an interview.

MAXIMIAN.

What agitation marks his countenance !

Enter Licinius.

LICINIUS.

Forgive the zeal that brings me to your presence
Abruptly, thus. Close by the palace gate
I met brave Sextus hastening to the Emperor.
Treason, he told me, was abroad ; Pompilius
And Saturnin were seized on strong suspicion.
The names of Felix and Lucilius too,
He said, were mention'd as confederates
In a conspiracy, most foul and dang'rous,

MAXIMIAN. (*aside.*)

Confusion ! how must I avert this blow ?

LICINIUS.

Where is the Princess ? When her brother's safety
Is threaten'd, may I not presume to offer
That consolation, and those services,
Which every faithful servant of the throne
Wou'd wish to render in the hour of peril ?

FAUSTINA.

It must not be, for Constantine forbids
Your interviews. Rash man, the Emperor comes.

Enter

Enter Constantine and his Suite.

CONSTANTINE.

Empress! perhaps you are already told
To what extent some mal-contents have dared
Form their dark plots. But Providence decrees
That guilt shou'd be suspected, proved, and punish'd.
A traitor has with savage fury dared
To form a party, by whose means he aim'd
To reach the throne, and rob me of existence.

FAUSTINA.

Most horrible!

MAXIMIAN.

Can this be possible?

Your virtues surely Sir, must awe the hand
That would attempt to touch your sacred person.
It cannot be!

CONSTANTINE.

My Lord, you err. The man
Who hopes for universal approbation
Knows little of mankind. The common herd,
Incapable of true discernment, find
Even in virtue something to condemn,
If it is placed upon the throne; and envy
Will aim its shafts at those who stand most high
On fortune's ladder. Bad men will be found,
But Heaven protects me from their base attempts.
Straton, repenting, has disclos'd the plot;
And tho' the author of this bold design
Is yet conceal'd, I know the accomplices,
And shall detect their leader. Here comes one
From whom discovery may be extorted.

Enter

Enter Sextus, conducting Martian.

This traitor is the agent, by whose means
The vile confederacy was carried on.

MAXIMIAN. (*aside.*)

All must be lost !

CONSTANTINE.

Traitor ! for once be honest, and confess
Who led thee to conspire against the throne.

MARTIAN.

The fates are just ! I am inform'd by Sextus
That Straton has divulged our guilty scheme.
I know that death awaits me—I can meet it
With fortitude ; but I confess my nature
Shrinks at the thought of implicating one
Who now, beneath the impenetrable veil
Of secrecy profound, remains secure,
But whose apparent worth my breath cou'd tarnish,
And make him in one moment be disrobed
Of all the vestments of nobility,
Fall from a state of consequence and power
Down to an abject slave ; the worst and lowest
Of those who, doom'd to expiate their crimes
By manual labour, work to save that life
Which their hard toil wears out, or doom'd at once
To die a death more violent, experience
The horrid tortures of the murderous wheel.
My Lord, I am bound by a most solemn oath
To keep a secret that must die with me.

LICINIUS.

If it be so, yet does th' enormity
Of crimes so great exempt thee from the promise.

He

He must be sacrificed to save thy life.
Speak, villain! speak! or look for instant death.

CONSTANTINE.

Be brief—divulge his name. That service done,
We change thy doom from death to banishment.
Who form'd this wicked plot?

FAUSTINA. (*aside*).

(*To Severus.*) Alas! my father,
I tremble for his life.

MARTIAN. (*after a pause.*)

'Tis with reluctance
I yield to hard necessity, and purchase
My life by perjury—(*turns to Maximian*)
Your machinations
Have led us on to an abyss of ruin.

MAXIMIAN. (*with an air of surprise.*)

Traitor! what mean your words? I dare defy
Your base assertions.

CONSTANTINE.

(*To Martian*) This is all evasion!
Dare not with impious falsehood to accuse
The Empress' Father, honor'd in the State,
And rich in the esteem of all mankind.
Find out some name more suited to your purpose
If you expect to be believed—

(*To Maximian*) My Lord!

My wrongs are aggravated by this insult
Pointed at you.

FAUSTINA.

Oh Heavens!

CONSTANTINE.

A TRAGEDY.

49

CONSTANTINE.

(*To Martian.*) Consummate villain!
What have you more to say?

MARTIAN.

Question Licinius.

I have no more to say.

LICINIUS.

How traitor!

MARTIAN.

I am compell'd by Straton's perfidy
To ruin those through whose confed'rate arts
I am undone.

LICINIUS.

Dar'ft thou to brand me with the curfed name
Of a conspirator? Off, off, Severus!

(*To Severus, who holds him.*)

The Emperor's presence shall not check my fury.

MAXIMIAN.

Hah! my suspicions then were just.

CONSTANTINE.

(*To Licinius.*) I do command thee to restrain thyself.
This violence but more confirms the charge,
And warrants my suspicions. Say, is this
The faith so pure, so honest, and sincere,
Which you profess'd? When my deluded sister
Believed 'twas love alone that ruled your choice,
I knew your motive was ambition.—Yes,
'Tis plain to me the throne had charms superior
To Consulship, or any of those honours
My hand bestow'd.

LICINIUS.

Sir! I am all amazement.

What action of my life has justified

E

This

This black suspicion? If it is a crime
 To love the best and fairest of her sex,
 I own my guilt—if it is worthy death
 Let me then die. I own no other crime;
 But spare that fame which lives beyond the grave.

MAXIMIAN.

Cease to deceive the Emperor. Clemency
 May be obtain'd by your confessing more.
 Love has with strong temptation led you on
 To what at first might seem an enterprize
 By which alone the princess cou'd be gain'd.
 Ambition was but love's auxiliary,
 A secondary spur. But know Licinius,
 I have suspected from your rash expressions,
 Haughty demeanour, and outrageous threats,
 That disappointment, like an untamed steed
 Scorning the reins of reason, knew no bounds.

LICINIUS.

Such calumny is more than man can bear!
 Is it for this that I have served the state?
 For this have drawn my sword in the defence
 Of Constantine and Rome? A soldier's glory
 Is not such flimsy stuff that every breath
 Which blows upon it can dissolve its texture,
 And give it to oblivion. Ask the tribunes
 What are my merits? ask the brave Severus,
 If he can think thus meanly of a man
 Whose fame has been till this disgraceful charge
 Unfollied by suspicions that my soul
 Abhors the name of.

MARTIAN.

Knaves are known at last.

CONSTANTINE.

A TRAGEDY.

51

CONSTANTINE.

I'll hear no more—they shall be both confin'd.
 Guards do your duty, take away the prisoners,
 But keep them separate. *(they are led off.)*
(To Faustina.) I thought Severus
 Left you as I approach'd. Why does he shun
 My presence? Innocence need never fear
 The eye of close investigation—know
 I like it not Faustina. Love like mine
 Bears not a partner—you must meet no more.
 I am amaz'd to see you thus compos'd
 When foul rebellion menaces the state.
 My danger wakes no terrors in your breast;
 Unmov'd you heard the treasonable tale
 Scarcely surprized—a silent cold spectators
 Of such a scene. It but confirms my fears.

MAXIMIAN.

This accusation surely is unjust.
 Think of the loyal blood from which she springs,
 And doubt not her fidelity and love.

CONSTANTINE.

Your pardon good Maximian; jealousy
 With cruel force has gain'd possession here,
 And like an absolute and bold usurper,
 Drives reasonable thoughts and sage resolves
 From my afflicted bosom. But my friend!
 No more of this. Let us consider now
 What must be done with these conspirators.
 Whoe'er is dear to me must be in danger:
 Guard your own life, and use the authority
 With which I now invest you, to examine
 The prisoners farther. I to you commit
 The task to punish or to pardon; use

My power, and let my confidence proclaim
How I discredit those who dare accuse you.

MAXIMIAN.

Your life, your interests must be dear to me;
And tho' your courage scorns the name of fear,
I must be apprehensive still of danger,
And screen you from it. As the safest step
I must proceed to change the guard—those men
Were chosen by Licinius—I'll remove them.

FAUSTINA.

(*To Maximian.*) My lord forbear. I am responsible
For the Emperor's safety; leave the rest to me;
Due orders shall be issued.

CONSTANTINE.

Yes Faustina,

I know your virtue and respect your conduct.
When I contemplate those angelic features,
And hear that voice, I blame my own suspicions.
Pardon the weakness that proceeds from love;
And as a proof how much I dare to trust you,
I leave the order to yourself. Maximian
Farewell; we meet to-morrow at the senate.

[*Exit Constantine and Faustina.*]

MAXIMIAN.

My Lord farewell.

Thus far I've borne the storm.
The angry billows for a time retire,
But soon may burst like mountains on my head;
Yet will I struggle boldly with the peril

That

That now encompasses my darling scheme.
 The Emperor's confidence, Faustina's love,
 These are my best securities. Avaunt
 Grim spectre Fear! I will endanger Life,
 And sport with Honour to acquire a Crown.

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—Maximian's House.—*A Lady in a long Veil crosses the Stage with an Attendant, who knocks hastily at the Door of the House.—Slave appears,*

SLAVE.

Who with such rude and hasty violence
 Disturbs our quiet at this early hour?

LADY.

One who Maximian will receive—go tell him,
 A person charged with some important business
 Sends him this signet, and requires admittance. [*Exit*
 Kind fate, dispose him to befriend my suit. *Slave.*
 Thus far has love conducted her who ne'er
 Yet cross'd a street in Rome, without a train
 Proclaiming her importance. Pride gives way
 To love and fear; yet it is much for me,
 In humble language to solicit him
 Whose arrogance I hate—whose scorn I dread.

E 3

Enter

Enter Slaves.

SLAVE.

Madam, be pleas'd to enter. *(they go in.)*

*A magnificent Apartment.—Maximian with the Signet.—
Enter the Lady and her Attendant.—She puts back her
Veil, and is discovered to be Constantia.—Maximian
bows, and returns the Signet.*

CONSTANTIA.

My Lord, you well may wonder at a visit
So private, and at such an hour, from one
Who has been us'd to have an hundred slaves
Ready to bear her errands. In this case
No messenger cou'd suit my urgent purpose;
I therefore have outstepp'd the modest rules
Of strict propriety, to be myself
Th' interpreter of my own sorrows. Sir,
I am told a good and valiant man is bound
In undeserv'd fetters. That the Consul
Licinius is a prisoner, proves most clearly
To those who know his worth, that enemies
Of virtue, can asperse the noblest fame.
He has defy'd them all to prove his treason,
Why then is Martian suffer'd to remain
Unquestion'd further? That Licinius' life
Is dear to me, his glory dearer still,
I dare affirm to you; and from your justice
Require a speedy, strict examination,
Of those who call him an accomplice.

MAXIMIAN.

Madam!

I own the *seeming* virtues of Licinius

Made me so much his friend, that I cou'd scarce
Believe the charge; but strong corroboration,
Proofs black as guilt can make them, glaring facts,
Have ris'n in evidence against this man
Whom I had deem'd so perfect.

CONSTANTIA.

Oh Maximian!

My love was founded on esteem: believe me,
If it is *proved* Licinius is a traitor,
That love deprived of its material basis
Will sink to nothing. I shall scorn the man
Whose soul is tinged with guilt; I shall abhor him.
Be a strict judge, yet be impartial too.
I cannot think him criminal—past actions
Are hostages of his fidelity. It seems
Martian alone can . . .

MAXIMIAN.

Tortures will exact

The truth from him; and as he dared accuse me,
'Tis just I should to clear myself, pursue
Most rigorous measures to extort the secret.
Yet I suspect Licinius will appear . . .

CONSTANTIA.

Great souls, incapable of what is vile,
Shou'd not suppose it possible in others. *(with a look*
I leave you to consider what you ought *of contempt.)*
In justice to perform.—Flavia your arm—
With heavy heart I must return. *Exit.*

MAXIMIAN.

'Tis well!

I see Licinius wou'd be near the throne.
Too near for my security—his fetters
Must not be loosen'd, till my seat is fix'd

E 4

Firm

Firm on the throne of Rome—to gain *that* height
 I must remove all rivalry—one pang
 Clings to my heart—yet Nature's powerful voice
 Meets a bold disputant in proud *Ambition*.
 Methinks I see his giant form appear
 Wrapp'd in a glittering garb; his stormy brow
 Bound with a bright tiara—sceptres, crowns,
 And treasures are beneath his feet. But lo!
 His robe unfolds—I see it lined with blood,
 I see a dagger in his hand, inscribed . . .
 Oh horror! characters of blood are there . . .
 I see Faustina's name—false phantom hence!
 What if it serve my views to name a daughter
 And screen myself, is not the Emperor's love
 Her safeguard?—Will she not partake my honors,
 And only seem to share the crime. Be gone
 Tormenting thoughts! vain fears! and idle scruples!
 I cannot reign except by villany,
 And grasp the crown I will—or die.

Enter Severus.

MAXIMIAN.

Welcome Severus—we must lose no time;
 In vain have I imprisoned this Licinius
 Unless we can prevail upon Faustina
 To change the guard—she strangely gives advice
 That mars my enterprize—you must assist me
 To mould her to my will.—The Emperor
 Is jealous, fierce, and cruel. I suspect
 Her life is insecure while he exists.
 Suspicious of her love for you, he threatens,
 Raves, and despairs—we must be speedy, Sir!
 Or you will lose the prize. I tremble for her,
 I know him to be savage and revengeful;
 Most capable of deep deliberate deeds.

SEVERUS.

SEVERUS.

Be not precipitate—a skilful pilot
Will moor his ship, altho' the shore is near,
Left thro' his haste, by hidden rocks assail'd,
The vessel and its freight should there be wreck'd,
And he shou'd lose his merchandize for ever.

MAXIMIAN.

Had the conspirators been dragg'd to death
The instant they were taken, then my lord
I should have less to dread.—Each arm'd with poignards
(Provided secretly by Martian's care)
They wou'd have reach'd the Emperor's breast,
And bought their pardon, with his blood.

SEVERUS.

Fate has oppos'd
That rash design. The Emperor's life is safe;
Take care of your's—there yet is time to fly
And save yourself from that discovery
Which must destroy you.

MAXIMIAN.

I have lived too long
His abject slave—and I would rather die
Than be so still. Sir! I will not obey
Where I shou'd rule. No, let the thunder fall.
If it must crush me, I will yield my life,
In such a cause as this. I'll not recede
This dangerous project I have dared to plan,
And I will not renounce it—I would tear
My heart to atoms, if 'twas capable
Of such a change. I must attain the throne
Tho' I shou'd wade thro' seas of blood, to reach it.

Come

Come Danger in thy rudest form array'd,
I 'list beneath thy banners.

SEVERUS.

Stubborn man!

Why can'st thou not be firm in virtue's cause
As thou art obstinate in guilt? 'tis madness
To persevere—thy ruin must ensue.

A Bustle is heard.—Enter Constantine, Guards, &c.

CONSTANTINE. (*much disordered.*)

Maximian, faithful friend! you see me now
Of all men the most wretched—some unknown
Mysterious reason, has induced Faustina
To ask me, even on her knees, with tears
Not to interrogate the traitors. This,
She begs that *you* may do—perhaps my lord
She may be implicated in this treason,
Which prompts her to request that you alone
(Who wou'd no doubt be lenient to her faults)
Shou'd question these conspirators in private.

SEVERUS.

Can Constantine believe this?

CONSTANTINE.

Silence traitor!

I know your influence but too well—the Empress
Acts in conjunction with the man to whom
I lately thought myself and Rome indebted.
Rome still may be so—you again may triumph.
My bond of obligation now is cancel'd.

SEVERUS.

This language Sir! is hard to be endured.—
You are my Emperor, and Faustina's husband;

As

As such I must submit to the affront.
 If any other man who walks the globe
 Shou'd dare to tax me with a heinous fault,
 The world wou'd be too narrow for us both,
 And I shou'd manifest myself a coward
 Did not my rage pursue him.

CONSTANTINE.

Wond'rous courage !

You dare become a cool deliberate traitor,
 Yet will not bear the *name* of guilt.

This paper,

Yes false Severus ! all your boast of courage
 And artificial virtue will give way
 Oppos'd to such an evidence of treason.

I want no farther testimony. Here

Behold his own hand-writing. (*gives it to Maximian.*)

SEVERUS. (*aside.*)

Fatal paper !

Undone Faustina !

MAXIMIAN.

I am all amazement—

'Tis written to the Empress.

(*reads.*) “ Dear Faustina !

The plot seems hastening to a crisis. Know,
 Perhaps this very night the Emperor dies.

Be vigilant, be speedy in your measures,

For all is lost, unless you can prevent him

From hearing the accomplices. Beware,

Lest he should change the guard—

Your friend, Severus.”

Maximian

(*Maximian continues*)

Ungrateful man!—And must my daughter fall
A victim to his cursed arts? The traitor,
By this vile letter, has attacked her life.
'Tis defamation. She cou'd never be
A partner in his crime—rage, jealousy,
And fierce revenge, impel him to involve her
In this dark plot; and since she's lost to him,
He is resolv'd to ruin her with thee.

CONSTANTINE.

Defend her not—I found the traitress reading
This letter, when I unexpectedly
Came into her apartment—she endeavor'd
To hide it from me, but her strange confusion
Awaken'd my suspicions—I demanded
The paper from her—she refus'd to give it,
Till violence succeeded to entreaty.
She shall be brought to thee,

MAXIMIAN.

My blood is curdled;

My reason staggers at this strange event,
Which fills me with despair—wou'd I had died
Long long ago, or had with Diocletian
In his Salonian garden, learned the art
To extract amusement from the herbs and flowers;
I've lived too long—my daughter was the pride,
The idol of my heart. I made her Empress,
And gloried in her elevation.—Fool!
It had been better to have match'd her beauties
To some plebeian—even to a bondsman,
Than to have seen her fall from such a height
To be a wretch, thus branded with disgrace.
(*aside.*) So far I dare. The Emperor's doating fondness
Will be her sure protection.

CONSTANTINE.

6x

How I have loved her, the regret I feel
Too well declares.—'And tho' she madly aims
At my destruction, I can pity her.
She never loved, yet wherefore should she hate me!

Oh ! Constantine ! misfed suspicious man,
Can you believe her guilty—do her justice.
Does not her virtue, calm and dignified
As its whole course has been, refute the falsehood ?

Can you deny this paper?

If my fame
Is insufficient to pronounce me guiltless
Of any criminal design on you,
Condemn and punish me—but spare Faustina.
She Sir is innocent. I own myself,
Unfortunate in knowing what I know,
Yet far from criminal, as you suppose.
Death is no punishment to him, for whom
The world has lost its charms—and future ages
Will vindicate my fame—Time's rapid wheel,
Which brings events to light, will clear my honor
And prove that Constantine the Great, cou'd err.

Yes, you shall die !—my rage demands your life,
And justice sanctions the decree. Your fate
Will be sufficient punishment for her
Who is the base accomplice of your crimes.

SEVERUS.

SEVERUS.

Lay not your sacrilegious hands on her.
'Tis all I ask. That she is innocent
I dare attest the gods

MAXIMIAN.

Rash man forbear, lest in the capitol
Where Jupiter presides, his awful form
Shou'd totter on its basis, portents strange
And horrible be seen, avenging heaven
Thunder its menaces at perjur'd men,
And punish falsehood by immediate death.

SEVERUS.

What mean your dark invidious hints? speak on;
You cannot dare to implicate Faustina?

MAXIMIAN.

I am all horror, grief, and consternation.
I have believed her far above reproach;
But you Severus, you are her director
I say no more.

SEVERUS.

Bafe man! it is enough.

The interest of the Empress is to me
Dear as my own; her happiness more dear
Than life, or any thing except my honour.
I know she needs a champion to defend her,
But also know she loves a worthless father.
This ties my tongue; but do not press me on,
Lest I say more

CONSTANTINE.

How dare you in my presence
Boast of your passion for his guilty daughter?—
She comes to second you.

(Enter

A TRAGEDY.

63

(Enter Faustina, Sextus, Flavia, and Suite.)

Now let us hear

What this immaculate and gen'rous woman
Will say to prove Severus innocent.
Madam, the noble General has with zeal
Attempted to defend you—gratitude
Requires its recompence. Say that this paper
Bears not his writing, was not meant for you;
Say 'twas a forgery, a base contrivance
To make the brightest pattern of her sex
Appear the worst; say

FAUSTINA.

Constantine, no more!

I scorn disguise, nor wou'd to save Severus
Avail myself of any subterfuge
The artful might invent. This paper Sir,
Which is the proof of our intelligence,
Is call'd our accusation. Why 'twas written
I do not blush to recollect—the motive
Was such as virtue places in her list
Of meritorious deeds. An awful secret
Conceals the reason from the eye of justice;
But tho' appearances may be against us,
My heart acquits me

Emperor beware!

You know there is a plot—you blindly think
All the conspirators are in your power.
Mistaken man! from those who wou'd defend
Your sacred life you turn, and court destruction.

CONSTANTINE.

In vain you try to mask your perfidy
By this mysterious language. If my life

Is

Is aim'd at by some unsuspected hand
I must resign it; but before that hour
Severus shall precede me to the tomb.

FAUSTINA.

Oh torture of the mind! I cannot bear it.
Which way am I to turn?
(*Kneels to the Emperor.*) Behold me thus,
A supplicating creature! If Faustina
Was ever dear, with clemency and patience
Hear me this once: that noble-minded man
Deserves far different treatment Sir from you.
'Tis for my sake he sacrifices life,
Endangers fame, and bears the cruel taunts
That goad his generous soul.

MAXIMIAN.

For *you* he bears
These insults? shame upon the base avowal!
What, do you glory in your mutual love?
Silence would best become you.

SEVERUS.

Monster hence!
Dare not to utter one reflection more
On her, by whose injunction I have been
Silent so long. Such stubborn villany
Shall not be screen'd by me. There, Constantine!
There see the traitor! (*pointing to Maximian.*)

FAUSTINA exclaims

Oh forbear! forbear!

SEVERUS.

That villain is the head conspirator;
And wou'd to heaven my Lord he was not father
To the most injured of her sex.

CONSTANTINE.

In vain
This charge is made. What in Maximian's life
Is found analogous to wickedness?
The charge is too improbable, . . . too plain
The unmanly subterfuge.

MAXIMIAN.

I leave my life
To speak in my defence. A gracious Emperor,
By justice sway'd, will let past services,
And loyal actions, balance in the scale
Against this bold impeachment, forged by malice.

CONSTANTINE.

(To Severus.) Infernal villain! who to save the daughter
Can't wish to sacrifice a virtuous man.
Tell me, what motive can Maximian have
In putting Constantine to death? Alliance,
Friendship, and interest, bind him to the throne.
Has aught appear'd throughout his former life
Approximate to fraud and villany?
Did he not prove himself above all views
Of personal advantage, when he chose
To abdicate a crown, whose weighty cares
He thought were more than equal to its lustre?
Wou'd he have done so if he lov'd to govern?
Or if he were ambitiously inclin'd,
Is't not enough that he has rais'd Faustina
To the imperial dignity of Empress?

F

SEVERUS.

SEVERUS.

The splendour of a throne may be regretted
When it is lost. This is the mighty secret
For which Faustina's fame has been endanger'd—
For which my life is threaten'd.

I have oft
Seen death, and braved it in the field—to die
Is but the common lot of all—the debt
Which frail mortality must pay. For me
Life has such trifling charms, that I shou'd scorn
To keep it by a lie; believe me then,
When I protest this paper was design'd
To save you from the assassin's blade. The moment,
When the conspirators had been conducted
Into your presence, was to seal your doom.
Licinius falsely was accus'd; in him
They fear'd an obstacle, and therefore sought
The means for his removal and confinement;
Thus I develop stratagem and treason.
Maximian is the father of Faustina,
And I have wish'd to save him; but his crimes
Are so enormous, and his guilt so bold,
That even mercy is asham'd to screen
So foul a monster from the eye of justice.

MAXIMIAN.

Faustina, wherefore are not you my voucher
For this man's truth? why stand you thus dismay'd?
Come, act the parricide, wound this old breast,
Destroy the fame of sixty-seven years,
And doom my hoary head to be the forfeit.
What is a father's safety to a lover's?
Haste to corroborate the evidence,
And save his life at the expence of mine.

FAUSTINA.

A TRAGEDY.

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FAUSTINA.

(*To the Guards*) Retire awhile. (*they withdraw.*)

Ah why, my cruel father,
This cutting speech, that stabs me to the heart?
I have not sure deserved it. My ill stars
Have placed me under an abhorr'd suspicion
Of what my mind could never meditate.
I say no more; the Emperor must decide
As in his wisdom he may think most fit.

CONSTANTINE.

I know too much Faustina for my honour,
Too much for my repose. Your faithless conduct
Has shewn the magnitude of my misfortune;
And while I must condemn your vile design,
I mourn the victim I am bound to punish.
But *be* (*turning to Severus*) who cou'd persuade you, is the
object

Of my unbounded fury.—Take him hence.

(*To the Guards.*)

Enter Sextus hastily.

SEXTUS.

My Lord, an insurrection is begun.
The people, hearing of an accusation
Against Severus, throng towards the Forum
Calling for justice. Vainly have the Tribunes
Threaten'd, implored, remonstrated. Licinius
Is freed from prison. He with loyal zeal
Strove to restrain them, urged his Consulship
And due authority, commanded, reason'd,
But to no purpose. All the soldiery
Assembled in the Capitol in arms
Demand their General, their beloved Severus;

Inflame the people by the glowing story
Of his brave actions in the field of battle,
And swear to die in the defence of him
Who oft expos'd his life to serve his country.

(The Emperor takes Sextus apart.)

MAXIMIAN. *(aside.)*

Curse on this popular phrenzy. Must Severus
Be ever thus the idol of the people?
The tale is poison to my envious spirit;
I thirst the more for his destruction.

CONSTANTINE.

(To Maximian) Sextus

Approves my wish of going forth in person
To check these mutineers, by giving them
My royal promise of impartial trial
To this suspected man. The danger presses;
I wou'd not have Severus put in bonds,
Yet you my Lord must keep a watchful eye
Upon his actions: if he heads the soldiers,
I know not where the mischief may extend.

SEXTUS.

Sire, I can answer, as a fellow-soldier,
For the unblemish'd honour of Severus.
He is unfortunate to have occasion'd
Your royal anger, and he may be guilty
In some respects, but I will pawn my life
On his adherence to the laws of honour.
None can impeach his courage, and believe me
It is not greater than his sense of duty.
Make me the hostage for his conduct.

CONSTANTINE.

A TRAGEDY.

69

CONSTANTINE.

Come,

We will discuss this point in private.

[Exit Constantine and Sextus.]

FAUSTINA.

(To Maximian.) Heavens!

To what a sad dilemma I am driv'n!
How can I act? which way preserve your life,
And do my duty by the Emperor? Sir!
Maximian! *Father!* by that tender name
Let me implore you to preserve the man
Who you so deeply injure—save Severus!

MAXIMIAN.

Faustina we are now alone—the mask
Here may be laid aside—shake off, I pray you,
This womanish weakness: let a father's life
Come in your computation of those things
Which may be worth preserving. Constantine
Must die, or I must perish. Proud dominion
Courts my ambitious hand. I form'd the plot,
I whet the assassin's blade, and like a mole
Working in darkness, toil to undermine
The man I hate. In Martian's name alone
The plot was carried on, but see in *me*
Him who first plann'd this bold conspiracy,
Known but to Martian. I have secret means
Of favouring his escape, which exercised
Will make me safe. Look not astonish'd thus,
Severus is the pledge of your obedience.
Dare not oppose my will. Remember madam,
His life is in my power—if you betray me,
That valued life is forfeited.

F 3

FAUSTINA.

FAUSTINA.

My Lord!

That I have heard in silence, is because
 No words can speak my horror of a crime
 So heinous to the Gods. Oh Sir! consider
 (Ere you with paricidal rage imbrue
 Your hands in blood so sacred) what remorse
 Must follow such a deed. Think not the throne
 Can make amends for guilt. If Constantine
 Was odious to you, why (distracting thought!)
 Why did you make him husband to Faustina! (*weeps.*)

MAXIMIAN,

Think not to shake my purpose by your tears,
 Is he not Emperor? that is crime enough.—
 I gave you to him for my own ambition,
 To gain his confidence, and then destroy him,
 Degraded from that rank which once I held,
 Whoever is above me I abhor,
 And seek to ruin. 'Tis not Constantine,
 'Tis not the *man* I see with deadly hate,
 It is the *Emperor*. I must gain his seat,
 Or die in the attempt,

FAUSTINA.

Remember Sir

He is not a usurper—'twas his father
 Who wore this crown you chose to abdicate,
 He reigns then by hereditary right,
 And what is more—he well deserves to reign,

MAXIMIAN.

Go then, unnatural child! betray me to him.
 Make me the sacrifice—if you prefer
 The Emperor to your father, seal my death,

FAUSTINA.

A TRAGEDY.

71

FAUSTINA.

Wretched Faustina! how am I to act?
Can I condemn my parent—him to whom
I owe my life! whose tender anxious care
Preserv'd me oft from peril and distress
In early years! yet will I ne'er consent
That Constantine should be his victim.

MAXIMIAN.

Go!

Try to preserve him by accusing me.
Make your discovery—it will be in vain.
Think not, suspected as you are, accused
Of infamous proceedings with Severus,
To gain more credit to your idle tale
Than he obtain'd with all his declamation.
Who will believe you? spight of your endeavours
I still shall triumph—I have ample means,
(Invested as I am with power) to reach
The utmost summit of my hopes.—Once there,
My name will, by the Roman parasites,
Be stiled Illustrious, and the deed applauded.
Farewell Faustina. Empire is my aim,
And I will seize it.

[Exit.

FAUSTINA.

Horror fills my breast.

Something must be attempted, but alas!
I know not what. My sad presaging soul
Sickens beneath its fears—my father's guilt
Is palpable and vile. Yet I must feel
A strong desire to screen him from exposure
And punishment, however just. A child
Shou'd never lose remembrance of her duty.

The tyger, born amidst hyrcanian wilds,
 Savage in nature, train'd to depredation,
 And deaf to all the cries of those it slaughters,
 Yet will submit to the imposing voice
 Of its fierce dam. Docile with her alone,
 And tam'd by nature's power, will fondly play,
 Pursue her steps, and crouch beneath her feet.
 If love like this in savage beasts is found,
 How can the human race forget the tie
 That binds the child and parent. Filial love
 Is born with us—shou'd strengthen with our strength,
 And end but with existence. Yet, my husband,
 I must devise the means to prove a shield
 Against the base attempts that menace thee,
 Ev'n if I perish.

Enter Flavia with the Guards.

FLAVIA.

Pardon this intrusion!

The tumult is increasing every hour; (*A shout is heard.*)
 The prison gates appear to be besieged
 By an arm'd multitude; they loudly call
 Upon Licinius; who in fetters bound,
 Like an enraged lion, frets beneath
 The shame of thralldom.

FAUSTINA.

Sad perplexity

And fear oppress me—every moment teems
 With such fresh cause for serious apprehension.
 My mind is like a chaos; and in vain

I search for unconfus'd and sober thought
 To guide me right. May fate avert the evils
 That threaten Rome, and save those valued lives
 So justly dear to this perturbed breast! [Exeunt.]

SCENE IV.—*An Apartment in the Palace.—The Emperor and Constantia.*

CONSTANTINE.

'Tis said his prison gates by you were open'd,

CONSTANTIA.

My Lord! I saw you on the brink of ruin.
 Already was a mutiny attempted.
 Rebellion stalk'd with giant steps along
 The streets of Rome.—In vain the Lictor's axe,
 The Tribunes voice, the Senators command,
 Oppos'd the furious populace—they throng'd
 Even to the palace gate—with savage fury
 They charged you with the crime of tyranny,
 Ingratitude, injustice. As their zeal
 Increas'd, their courage seem'd to gain more strength,
 And with loud cries the soldiers rent the air;
 Then beat to arms, and fought the prison gates,
 Calling Severus to release Licinius.
 In such an evil case, I dar'd to hazard
 Your royal indignation—by my order

The

The Consul had his liberty restored;
 Yet he refus'd to profit by th' occasion,
 Till he perceiv'd his presence could alone
 Refrain the rage of an unbridled mob.

CONSTANTINE.

I say no more, my spirit is subdued.
 I wou'd confront the rebels, crush this tumult,
 And bring them all to due subordination;
 But my heart sinks beneath domestic treason.
 There, there I bleed—Faustina is my foe.
 Her whom my doating soul was fix'd upon,
 Who I believ'd incapable of guilt,
 Is leagu'd against me—I have been deceived.
 I know her now—yet cannot bear to punish.

CONSTANTIA.

Think her not guilty, till you prove her so.
 Martian is fled—he only knew the truth,
 And kept the counsels of some secret traitor.
 From him you might have learnt . . . but 'tis too late.

CONSTANTINE.

His flight, Constantia, has not been successful;
 He was arrested at the postern gate
 By wary Sextus, who in private brought him
 To a securer prison. In despair,
 The wretched man, when threaten'd with the torture,
 Within this hour has made a full confession.
 Oh! you will shudder when you hear the name
 Of him who secretly has been the author
 Of this rebellion . . . 'tis Faustina's father.

CONSTANTIA.

Maximian!

CONSTANTINE.

CONSTANTINE.

Yes Constantia! it is he.

The ungrateful monster, under friendship's mask,
 Hid an assassin's heart.—The crown for him
 Had such attractions, that to gain it from me
 He was the arch conspirator, the head
 Of this base plot against my throne, and life;
 He plann'd the ruin of Licinius too,
 By making him the object of suspicion,
 And (when alarm'd by what Severus said
 To criminate him) work'd upon Valerius
 To favour the escape of Martian, who
 Possess'd his dangerous secret. He believes
 His confidant is fled—it rests with us
 To let him think so, till we have assembled
 All those who were his agents in the plot.

CONSTANTIA.

Think not my Lord it can be possible,
 For such a glorious hero as Severus
 To be concern'd in this detested scheme.

CONSTANTINE.

Why was he silent at the first? he knew
 Th' extent of their designs—till Straton spoke
 He kept the secret. I have order'd Sextus
 To bring him hither. I wou'd wish to hear
 Him and Faustina once again, Confronted
 I will interrogate them both, and try
 To find them innocent.—Heaven knows the joy
 With which I shall acquit them, if the proofs
 Are not so stubborn as to shut the door
 Against equivocal opinion. Then,
 If obvious and unquestionable guilt
 Forbids the exercise of lenity,

I must

I must pronounce the sentence due to treason,
And act against my nature.

CONSTANTIA.

See my Lord

The Empress comes!

CONSTANTINE. (*aside.*)

Her face betrays no guilt;

I will believe her innocent.

(*With great emotion, to her.*) Faustina!

Can you forgive the man who, hard beset
With enemies, unknowing whom to blame
Or to believe, has in that trying hour
Look'd with suspicion on the wife he loves?

FAUSTINA.

If I am guilty Sir, no punishment
Can be severe enough for such a crime,
Nor is my life essential to the state.
What benefit can Rome derive from me?
I shall be never miss'd; or if I am,
The voice of pity, or the tear of sorrow,
Will mark my tragic story for a day,
Then I shall be forgotten. But, my Lord,
If brave Severus shou'd be doom'd to death,
The murmers of your subjects wou'd increase,
Tumult and anarchy pervade the kingdom,
And in that hour you wou'd regret the arm
Which might uphold an empire. Learn to prize
A faithful subject and a valiant soldier;
Nor think *that* man, who by a single word
Might win a multitude to serve his purpose,
He who has fought and bled for Rome, and now
Seeks no revenge for imputed treason,

Can

A TRAGEDY.

77

Can soil the laurels he so nobly won,
By a disloyal thought against his sovereign?
While you suspect that he alone is guilty,
You lay yourself more open to those foes
Who practise treason while they talk of duty.
I say no more—my wish to save your life
From secret enemies, my anxious hope
That you may long and happily exist,
The Gods can witness. Rouze your noble spirit,
Judge for yourself, appease an angry people:
By your impartial deeds, and love of virtue
Deserve the name of Constantine the Great,
And reign belov'd by Rome—approv'd by Heaven.

CONSTANTIA.

Enough Faustina! I perceive my brother
Laments the cruel arts that have been used
To make him for a moment think you guilty.

CONSTANTINE.

Forgive my weakness, and forget the insult.
Henceforth possess my confidence securely.
What I shall do, can only be determin'd
By the opinion of the senators;
The hour to meet them is arriv'd—Farewell. [Exit.

FAUSTINA.

Methinks some terrible and great event
Hangs o'er our heads, and struggles for atchievement.
Something will sure be done. Ye Gods preserve
Those who are dear to us from harm! Constantia,
My spirit, which supported me so long,
Now yields to cowardice.

Did you not say
Severus was at liberty?

CONSTANTIA.

*MAXIMIAN;**CONSTANTIA.*

He is.

And I am told the people press around,
 Beseeching him to use their services.
 The soldiers, one and all in union bound,
 Swear to defend their leader—they have made
 The arch erected for Severus' triumph
 Their place of rendezvous.

*Enter Licinius.**LICINIUS.*

I come in haste

To seek the Emperor. Why a man suspected
 So late of treason shou'd unarm'd, alone,
 Undaunted rush into the royal presence,
 The danger of the moment must account for.
 Treason, tho' check'd, still gives alarming signs
 Of mischievous existence, and this moment
 Sextus arrives with more conspirators.
 A hand unknown distributes money freely,
 And makes the rabble desperate in their boldness.
 I come to warn the Emperor—he must double
 His guard before he seeks the senate house.

CONSTANTIA.

You are too late—the Emperor scorns precaution.
 I wonder that you met him not—already
 He faces danger.

FAUSTINA.

Heaven preserve his life!

LICINIUS.

My zeal to save him must excuse my haste.
 Farewell! I fly to guard his sacred person.

*[Exit.]**CONSTANTIA.*

A TRAGEDY.

79

CONSTANTIA.

Let us retire Faustina, and implore
The fates to succour those so dear to both.
I tremble for my brother, and I dread
Lest the impetuous courage of Licinius
Shou'd make him share the danger. Where, alas!
Will these disorders end? The furies seem
To wave the torch of discord o'er the city,
Encouraged by some unknown instigator,
Who like a base assassin stabs in secret. [Exeunt.

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in Maximian's House.*
Maximian enters with Letters in his Hand.

MAXIMIAN.

Why this is well; tho' wayward accident
 Has thwarted my original design,
 The blow is only parried for a time,
 And what one day denies, another offers.
 Rebellion, like an hydra-headed monster,
 Outlives the efforts used by Constantine
 To crush its being. Here, with joy I read
 My son is on his march to aid my views,
 And to partake my glory. Come Maxentius!
 Embrace your father, as the man from whom
 You shall receive a crown. Move swift ye hours,
 And bring him to my arms; meantime concealment
 Must sit with leaden wings upon the secret
 Which my dark stratagem requires. Licinius
 And proud Severus shall not cross my path
 To rob me of the rich reward of treason.
 I can prevent, and I can punish too;
 Nor will I halt till I attain the goal
 And cry Victoria, tho' I wade thro' blood

To

A TRAGEDY.

81

To compass my designs. The base plebeians
All court the rising sun, and they will soon
Implicitly obey me; for the present
I work upon them by the means of gold.
Would I cou'd win the soldiers; but they wear
Such stubborn honesty about their hearts,
That what their General counsels they approve,
And think it virtue to be loyal subjects—
Even to a man they are true.

Enter an Attendant.

ATTENDANT.

My Lord, some persons
Who say they come by your appointment, wait
Your presence in the anti-room.

MAXIMIAN.

I come.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—Severus's Arch.—*A loud Tumult is heard.*

Enter Sextus meeting two Soldiers.

SEXTUS.

Where is Severus? have you seen him, friend?

FIRST SOLDIER.

He cross'd this way but now, and to the Forum
With hasty step repair'd.

G

SECOND

SECOND SOLDIER.

The troops are there.

Those shouts proceed from thence—come let us on,
And see what follows. *[Exeunt.]*

SEVERUS. *(addressing the Mob.)*

Friends! brethren! soldiers! wherefore am I doom'd
To blush for those whom I so oft have prais'd?
You are degraded by the name of rebels,
And I in vain look round for those brave men
Who were united for their country's cause.
Are these the late companions of my dangers?
The bold supporters of the Roman arms?
I know you not—your features are the same,
But your hearts core is rotten—you are fall'n
From glory to dishonour.

SOLDIERS.

'Tis *your* cause

That makes us mutiny.

SEVERUS.

Leave to Severus

The task of self-defence—you are the foes
That pierce my breast. Where is your vow'd obedience?
I never gave an order in the field
That was disputed; but I now in vain
Urge you to put away these looks of wrath,
And to lay down your arms. Remember, friends,
That I have shared your dangers and fatigues;
On foot have travell'd o'er the sandy plains,
Scorch'd by the burning sun. At other times
Have climb'd the mountains height—denied myself,
When on the rapid march, food or repose,
Save what was indispensable tow'rd's life.

Have

A TRAGEDY.

83

Have I avoided danger in the field?
Or kept the spoil for my especial use?
No! I have been your partner in the toils,
And your rewarder in the hour of conquest.

(They shout) Long live Severus!

SEVERUS.

My friends, I do not ask for acclamations.
If I have well deserved, do not condemn me
To the disgrace of seeing men I love
Accounted rebels. If you persevere,
I can no longer be your general. Here
I will disband you; never, never more
Enrol you in the list of Roman soldiers
To fight beneath my banners. And this arch,
Erected as a monument of fame,
Shall witness your dismissal—my despair.

(A confus'd murmur heard.)

(After a pause) I am not wont to prate in commendation
Of my own deeds, but in an hour like this
I am appellant to your gratitude.
Now you have heard me plead in the defence
Of loyalty and honour, if you feel
Like me th' enthusiastic Roman flame
Of public virtue, cast away your swords,
Seek your respective homes. 'Tis in the field
Your courage shou'd be try'd; there clash your arms,
Whirl the keen blade, and openly attack
The foe you seek to conquer.
Peace and allegiance here must be your part,
And base is he who shall infringe their rules.
The wounds I gain'd in battle scarce are heal'd,
Yet my ungrateful soldiers pay me back

G 2

With

With disobedience for my past exertions,
 And all that love which I have ever borne them.
 What! shall I see you branded with disgrace,
 With infamy eternal, more severe
 Than the corroding shame that pales the cheek
 Of those who, mourning at the fate of war,
 Gave by their chains more splendour to my triumph?—
 Rather than see my soldiers so disgraced,
 I wou'd expose my bosom to their swords,
 And cry ' Strike home—life is not worth preserving.'

*(While Severus finishes his speech, they throw down
 their arms, and are retiring silently.)*

Thus you retrieve endanger'd honour! thus
 Regain my confidence, and prove yourselves
 True to the laws of honour, true to Rome,
 And dear to me. The man who dares rebel
 Against his sovereign, is a canker'd bough
 Spreading its secret mischief to the tree
 By which it is sustain'd; in such a case
 It shou'd be lopp'd at once, and cast aside.—
(alone) Thus does a gentle calm succeed the storm.
 So far is well. What now remains for me?
 One step besides, and Constantine is safe,
 Maximian punish'd. If Faustina's father
 Will practise villainy he ought to suffer,
 And Rome requires it. Let me then pursue
 The means to save my rival. In this hour
 All animosity and jealous rage
 Shou'd cease. Whoever is the people's choice
 And rightful lord, shou'd reign. 'Tis not the question
 Whether I love the *man*—he is my *king*,
 I honour royalty, and loath a traitor . . .
 Yes, it must be so—terrible indeed
 Appears the act that marks Faustina's parent

.For

A TRAGEDY.

85

For public punishment—but *such* a cause
Wou'd make it infamy to screen a traitor,

Enter Assassins.

FIRST ASSASSIN.

Firm to your purpose! there behold your prey.

(They attack him.)

SEVERUS.

Scoundrels avaunt!

(Strikes one to the ground; the two others come behind and wound him; he falls, and they run off.)

Enter Sextus hastily.

SEXTUS.

What noise was that? My Lord Severus fall'n!

Oh fate! Oh misery! Accursed villain!

(To the dying Assassin.) Who bribed thee to a deed so base?

ASSASSIN.

Maximian. *(dies.)*

SEXTUS.

That word has poison'd him who utter'd it.

Oh speak to me Severus, say . . . but rather

Let me procure assistance. *(going.)*

SEVERUS.

Stay my friend,

Thy generous succour can avail me nothing;

Life has no charm for me, and death no fear,

Nor do I die inglorious. It is true

The field of battle *should* have been my grave;

But tho' I die not harness'd for the fight,

And leading on my soldiers, the last act

G 3

That

That mark'd my life was pleading for my king,
 Him who I fought for I shall die defending,
 And therefore fall the servant of the state—
 A loyal subject.

SEXTUS. (*raising him.*)

Yet there may be hope.

SEVERUS.

The wish is vain—but thou may'st serve me Sextus,
 Support me only to the Emperor's presence—
 His danger urges me, by one last effort,
 To speak that truth which I too long withheld
 In pity to Faustina.

SEXTUS.

This exertion

Is rash indeed.

SEVERUS.

If thou hast ever loved me,
 Fulfil my wish—I'm equal to the task.
 Oh Sextus! I have ever found thee one
 Whom my soul honour'd—I have always mark'd
 Thy mind tenacious of its dignity,
 Nice in those points where *honour* was concern'd.
 Feel then for mine, which now supports my frame;
 It calls aloud for instant vindication,
 And every moment lost . . .

SEXTUS.

No more my friend,

I must obey thee.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE

A TRAGEDY.

87

SCENE III.—*An Apartment in the Palace—Faustina and Constantia at one door.—Enter at the other the Emperor, Licinius, Maximian, and others.*

FAUSTINA.

My Lord! your person has been much expos'd;
Why would you venture forth?—

CONSTANTIA. (*aside.*)

Licinius here!

How will the Emperor brook his presence?

CONSTANTINE.

(*To Faustina.*)

Madam!

Had danger been so imminently great
As was imagined, this brave injur'd man
Who gave me intimation of my hazard,
Would have employ'd his utmost power to save me,
I am ashamed to have been thus deceived
In such a character.

CONSTANTIA.

His fame is cleared,

And I am happy!

MAXIMIAN.

(*To Constantine.*) Yet beware my Lord
Of too much confidence—it has been rumour'd
That you this very night may be assail'd
By a perfidious guard. We know the power
Licinius has with the Pretorian band.
My duty forces me to speak, your safety
Demands my services, and I am ready

G 4

To

To expose my life for yours—let *me* defend you.
 I will keep guard in the adjoining chamber,
 That if the danger comes, I may encounter
 The savage hand of that consummate villain
 Who feels no awe of majesty, and dares
 Aim at a life so sacred. If my blood
 Flows in so good a cause, I shall die happy.
 Why did Licinius meanly quit the prison,
 And why did Martian fly? intelligence
 Is manifest between them. Martian knew
 Who led the enterprize—'twas therefore wise
 In his compeer to free him from his bondage,
 And favour his escape from Rome. 'Tis plain
 The one at liberty set free the other,
 My Lord, the man who chuses to evade
 The arm of justice, testifies his guilt.
 Licinius can excite, or quell a storm,
 I see you in his power—the rebels come—
 He aids the poignard pointed at your heart,
 And leads the blood-hounds to devour their prey—
 I see you Hah!

(He starts back and leans against the wall, as Sextus and Attendants bring in Severus.)

SEXTUS.

My Lord! Severus charged me to conduct him
 Thus bleeding to your presence.

FAUSTINA.

Gracious heaven!

Support me in this trying scene.

CONSTANTINE,

Whence are these wounds?

SEXTUS.

A TRAGEDY.

SEXTUS.

As from the capitol

I was returning, the repeated sounds
Of clashing swords admonish'd me to hasten
Towards the spot.—But the base deed was done
Before I came—my noble friend, who staid
To exhort his soldiers to lay down their arms,—had
Had scarce prevail'd, and seen them all disperse,
When three assassins suddenly attack'd him.
With his known valour he repuls'd awhile
Their sanguinary purpose. One he slew,
The others wounded him—and as he fell
Fled from his sight. Alas! I came too late
To save the hero, whose example long
Has been a lesson to my youthful-breast,
Yet am I not too late I trust, to save
His honour from suspicion. I will dare
To vindicate Severus in the fight
Of the whole world, against the breath of slander,
And when he faintly ask'd to be convey'd
To your imperial presence—I resolv'd
To risk your anger, rather than prevent
His making known some truths which he declared
To you alone shou'd be unfolded.

CONSTANTINE. (*To Severus.*)

I mourn your destiny, and Rome shall witness
Your death reveng'd. Speak then my Lord—declare
Whose hand has been employ'd against your life?

SEVERUS.

Where should assassination be suspected
But in that man who could conspire against you,

SEXTUS.

The vile assassin whom Severus slew,
(On being question'd) with his latest breath
Avow'd Maximian for his base employer.

FAUSTINA.

FAUSTINA. (*aside.*)

Oh! dreadful tidings! Jove's avenging thunder
Will sleep not long, when such a deed as this
Blackens the face of day. Alas Severus!

SEVERUS.

My Lord—the truth of an expiring man
Can surely not be question'd—I am going
Fast from a world where I have done no evil,
And therefore I die fearless—but my conscience
Will not allow me to die happy also,
Unless I warn you of th' infernal monster
Now foster'd in your bosom—turn to *him*,
That base Maximian,

MAXIMIAN.

I despise your malice.

SEVERUS.

Tho' you are father to the best of women,
I should die guilty, did I not accuse you.
With me all hopes, all fears are at an end,
I fall your victim—but the gods, who know
Faustina's innocence, will do her justice.
Virtue in her is outraged. If my presence
Could wake those jealous, groundless apprehensions,
Which might disturb the Emperor's repose,
And make Faustina wretched—fate is kind
To let me be the victim. With this thought
I am content to die.—Illustrious pair
Long may you live and reign.

Weep not for me

Most perfect of thy sex—it is inglorious
For one who is a soldier, thus to die
By foul assassination, yet remember,

Severus

A TRAGEDY.

95

Severus lived unsullied by a crime,
Unless a virtuous passion proves him guilty.
All now is over. Sextus . . . tell Licinius
I died the friend of him, and all brave men;
Comfort my soldiers, and defend my fame.
I faint—lend me your hand.

CONSTANTINE.

Much injur'd man!

Too late I mourn my error, and regret
Those prejudices that my jealous breast
So falsely entertain'd—thy innocence
Established thus, demands due punishment
On those who could asperse a name like thine,
And compass thy destruction—every honour
That can await on a lamented hero,
Shall on thy obsequies attend. (Severus dies.)

(Exit Sextus.)

MAXIMIAN.

My Lord!

Do you pronounce him guiltless—to the last
He dared to utter falsehoods—he has died,
Accusing me, from motives of revenge,
Because I gave Faustina to your wishes,
'Spight of his prior claim—yes, madam! weep;
You owe those tears to one, who for your sake
Has plunged himself in crimes. Your tender sorrows
Are render'd lawful now your lover's dead.
Living, they had been culpable. Your silence
Proves, more than words, th' extent of your affection,
Which finds no language adequate to speak
Your keen emotions—'tis most fortunate
For Constantine, his rival died so soon.

FAUSTINA.

Not only grief has urged me to be silent,
But also the respect and dutious love

Inherent

Inherent in my nature for a parent,
Bids me pursue that plan. I shall rejoice
If I'm permitted always to be silent.

[*Exit Faustina and Constantia,*

CONSTANTINE,

Heaven has allow'd the dying general
To charge you, Sir, with crimes. Defend yourself,
He is no more—the manner of his death
Is dreadful and disgraceful to its authors.
You are accus'd, as if the perpetrators
Were in your interest—'tis no common matter.
The senate will demand investigation
Of this atrocious deed.

MAXIMIAN,

My Lord, the man

Who has connived in the escape of Martian,
Accomplish'd this event. Licinius saw
A dangerous rival in the proud Severus,
Beneath whose power, that popularity
Which he so long had courted, was impair'd,
His fame eclipsed, his projects overturn'd.
Those two ambitious men, spurr'd on by hopes
To win a crown, conceiv'd the envious wish
To sacrifice each other, You, my Lord,
Will be the next to fall—your diadem
Is tottering on your brow. Come, let us hasten
To see strict justice done—Severus dead,
The flame of ill-suppress'd sedition soon
Must rage again—back'd by the populace
The soldiers will declare Licinius general,
And he will take advantage of their ardor
To seize the reins of government. Prevent
The growing mischief: in such pressing danger,
'Tis right a sov'reign's voice should speak in thunder.

Rouze

Rouze Constantine ! a moment lost is much,
 When death and desolation are so near.
 Give but the word of vengeance, and I fly
 To tear Licinius even from the arms
 Of a deluded people.

Enter Licinius, followed by the Lictors.

LICINIUS.

Spare yourself
 The pains my Lord. Behold Licinius comes
 To vindicate himself against impostors,
 Who have presumed to villify his name.—
 Sir, I am arm'd in conscious rectitude,
 And I despise your calumny. I come
 To justify myself.

MAXIMIAN.

Say by what means
 Did you elude the vigilance of those
 Appointed as your gaolers ?—wherefore steal
 From your imprisonment, unbar the door
 Of Martian's cell, but for nefarious deeds.
 And now you come, a bold and busy traitor,
 To prate of innocence. Full well you know
 A mighty people arm'd, are at your call,
 Ready to wreak their fury on the Emp'ror
 Soon as your voice directs them to begin
 The work of death and plunder. Frown not thus,
 Look yonder—your competitor in guilt
 Is slain—now tremble, and expect to follow.

LICINIUS.

Severus dead !—then Rome has lost her bulwark.
 Hero ! thou hast deserved a better fate,
 And should have died in battle. Here my heart
 Receives a wound indeed. Brave virtuous man !

Whoever

Whoever dares impeach thy loyalty,
 I will proclaim him false whoe'er he be,
 And justify the fame of him I mourn.
 A greater man, or a more loyal subject,
 A braver soldier, or a truer friend,
 Ne'er walk'd the earth, nor has he left his fellow.
 (*Turns to Constantine.*)

My Lord, forgive this warmth; and if I seem
 A man to be suspected, order Martian
 Into your presence; I demand to be
 Confronted with the wretch who dares impeach me.

MAXIMIAN.

My Lord! he knows the evidence is fled.
 Maugre this circumstance, he wou'd not dare
 Demand examination.

CONSTANTINE.

If this witness

May serve to prove his innocence or guilt,
 You will rejoice, Maximian, to be told
 That Martian is not so remote from Rome
 As you imagine.—Sextus, bring him in.

MAXIMIAN. (*aside.*)

Destruction to my hopes!

CONSTANTINE.

From him I learn,

That in my bed this very night the dagger
 Of an assassin was to shed my blood.
 A murderous band, admitted to th' apartment
 In which you offer'd to defend my person,
 Were to attempt the murder of their king,
 And be rewarded by the man I trusted.

Enter

A TRAGEDY.

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Enter Martian guarded.

MAXIMIAN.

Stay Constantine, you need not tell me more,
Nor call on Martian to divulge my crime.
The mystery now is over, and I stand
Unmask'd, complete in villany—a proof
What an ambitious man can dare to do.
Wherefore did Julius Cæsar envy Pompey,
And grapple with him for imperial sway?
When vanquish'd Pompey bled, assassination
Was colour'd by the plea of public good,
And Cæsar's name was idoliz'd in Rome.
Like him I wish'd to grasp at royalty,
But fate has foil'd me in the bold endeavour.
The throne is lost to me, and with it fades
My love of life—my hate to Constantine.
I am indifferent now to all events,
And ev'n if life was offer'd, would refuse it.

CONSTANTINE.

Abandon'd wretch! what complicated crimes
Hast thou to answer for! Severus slain!
Licinius slander'd! and my death intended!
The laws of empire broken and subverted,
Good faith and fellowship by thee destroy'd!
And a long train of evils that attend
Commotion in the state! These are the crimes
That call for *public* justice on thy head;
Else would my private wrongs, for the dear sake
Of my Faustina, yield to clemency,
And change the sentence into banishment.
Ungrateful villain, hast thou ought to say?

Enter

Enter Faustina, Constantia, &c.

FAUSTINA. (*kneeling to Constantine.*)

O'erwhelm'd with grief at what I hear, behold
A wretched woman prostrate at your feet,
Imploring mercy for a guilty father.
Ah! do not exercise your indignation.
Remember, Sir, the ties that bind me to him,
And spare his life.

MAXIMIAN.

Before you hear the answer,
Ask if I wou'd accept it. Learn Faustina,
Fall'n as I am, that I possess a spirit
Which never can endure an obligation
From those it injures, envies, and despises.
Reign madam, reign! but think not I will live
Your subject, or the slave of Constantine.
He ought to thank the hand that slew his rival.
I own the deed—it was by my command
Severus was destroy'd, and now I stand
Justly accus'd of conspiracy, murder,
And meditated regicide. I own
The charges just; yet to attain a crown
Would I again my catalogue of crimes
Wish to fill up—but wishes are in vain.
Time flies—the golden opportunity
Eludes my eager grasp, and leaves the shadow,
The visionary picture of dominion,
To gall my spirit, while reality
Is lost for ever to Maximian's hopes.
All I regret is having fail'd—for know
I still am free—am master of myself,
And I will prove it.—Tremble not Faustina!

At

At my undaunted liberty of speech.

I can do more than speak—to act is mine.

(*After a pause, turning to Constantine.*)

When Anerocistus king of Gaul, was foil'd

By fortunate Æmilius, he disdain'd

A mean submission to his conquering foe:

Rather than be a slave, he nobly chose

To die—and used his dagger as he ought.—

Like him I scorn to live, and once resolved,

Thus self condemn'd, behold me execute.—

Now bear me off. (*Stabs himself.*)

FAUSTINA.

Oh! dreadful deed! Oh my unhappy father!

(*He is carried off, followed by Faustina.*)

CONSTANTINE.

(*To Constantia.*) Faustina's feelings at a scene like this
Must be considered—follow her Constantia.

(*To Licinius*) My Lord I must acquit me of the debt

I owe your services, and it is just

My gratitude should publickly be shewn;

Therefore, when next the senators assemble,

I shall propose Constantia for your bride.

LICINIUS.

Thus on my knee (*going to kneel.*)

CONSTANTINE.

Nay thank me not Licinius!

The princess is your due. I blame myself

For having suffer'd a perfidious man

So long to practise on my confidence,

Shading the merits of my real friends.

The monster pays the forfeit of his crimes,

And by self-slaughter saves the liſtor's axe

The task of death. We now must to the Forum,

H

Severus'

Severus' death perhaps will raise a clamour
 Among the people—bear his body off,
 And with all military pomp prepare
 His obsequies—explain the dire event
 To those who question you.

To Providence

I owe my preservation—and 'tis fit
 That I shou'd offer up my grateful prayers
 To the all-ruling power, by whose decree
 Kings reign, and villains meet their just reward.



